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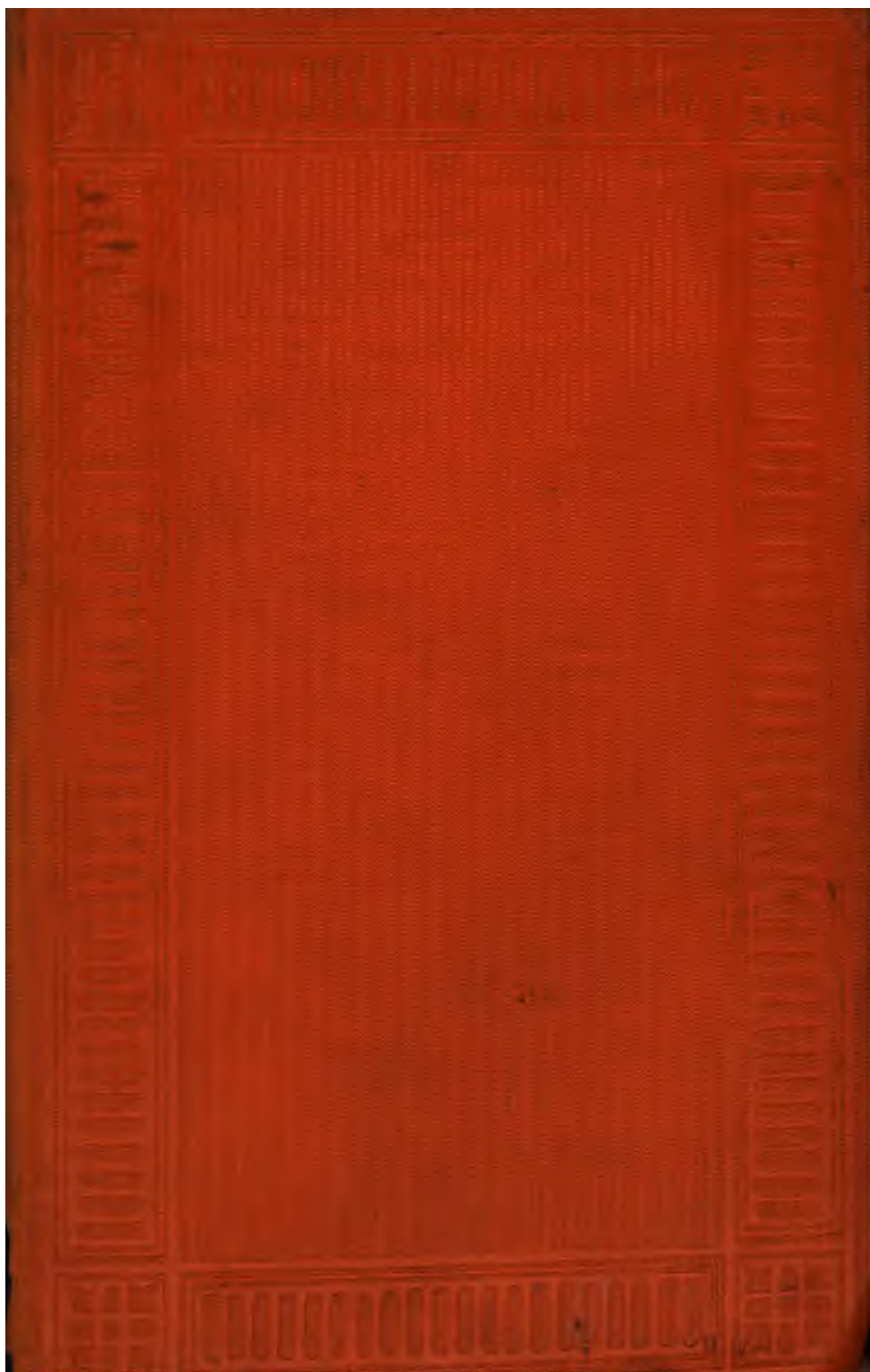
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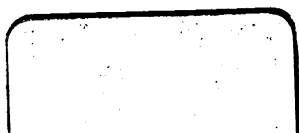
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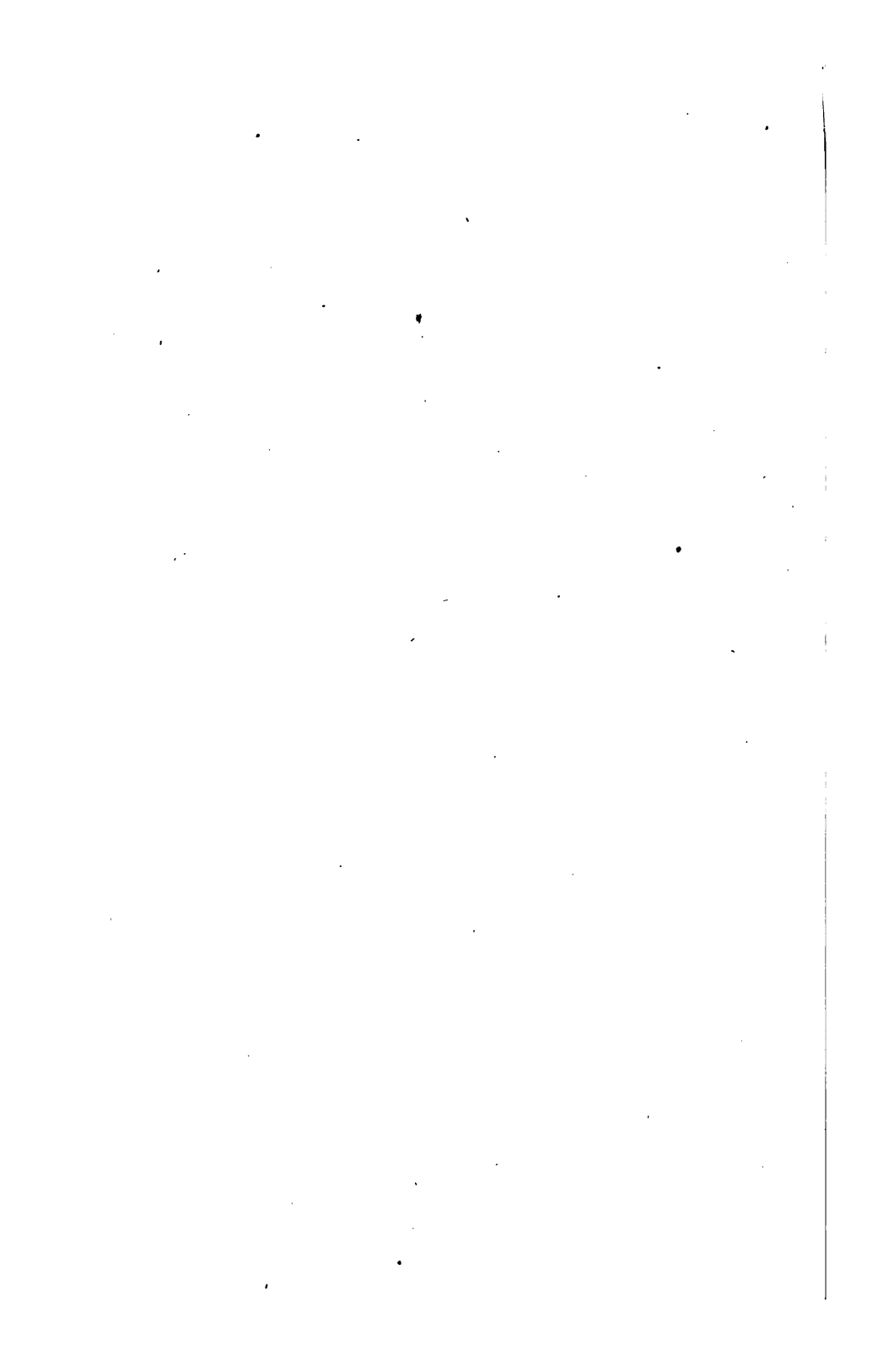
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THE QUADROON.

THE QUADROON;

OR,

A LOVER'S ADVENTURES IN LOUISIANA.

BY

CAPTAIN MAYNE REID,

AUTHOR OF "THE SCALP-HUNTERS."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE QUADROON.

CHAPTER I.

THOUGHTS.

THAT night I passed without repose. ' How was it with Eugénie ? How with Aurore ?

Mine was a night of reflections, in which pleasure and pain were singularly blended. The love of the quadroon was my source of pleasure, but, alas ! pain predominated as my thoughts dwelt upon the Creole ! That the latter loved me I no longer doubted, and this assurance, so far from giving me joy, filled me with keen regret. Accursed vanity, that can enjoy such a triumph !—

vile heart, that can revel in a love it is unable to return! Mine did not. It grieved instead.

In thought I reviewed the short hours of intercourse that had passed between us—Eugénie Besançon and myself. I communed with my conscience, asking myself the question, Was I innocent? Had I done aught, either by word, or look, or gesture, to occasion this love?—to produce the first delicate impression, that upon a heart susceptible as hers soon becomes a fixed and vivid picture? Upon the boat? Or afterwards? I remembered that at first sight I had gazed upon her with admiring eyes. I remembered that in hers I had beheld that strange expression of interest, which I had attributed to curiosity or some other cause—I knew not what. Vanity, of which no doubt I possess my share, had not interpreted those tender glances aright—had not even whispered me they were the flowers of love, easily ripened to its fruits.

Had I been instrumental in nurturing those flowers of the heart?—had I done aught to beguile them to their fatal blooming?

I examined the whole course of my conduct, and pondered over all that had passed between us. I thought of all that had occurred during our passage upon the boat—during the tragic scene that followed. I could not remember aught, either of word, look, or gesture, by which I might condemn myself. I gave full play to my conscience, and it declared me innocent.

Afterwards—after that terrible night—after those burning eyes and that strange face had passed dream-like before my disordered senses—after that moment I could not have been guilty of aught that was trivial. During the hours of my convalescence—during the whole period of my stay upon the plantation—I could remember nothing in my intercourse with Eugénie Besançon to give me cause for regret. Towards her I had observed a studied respect—

nothing more. Secretly I felt friendship, and sympathy; more especially after I had noted the change in her manner, and feared that some cloud was shadowing her fortune. Alas! poor Eugénie. Little did I guess the nature of that cloud. Little did I dream how dark it was!

Notwithstanding my self-exculpation, I still felt pain. Had Eugénie Besançon been a woman of ordinary character I might have borne my reflections more lightly. But to a heart so highly attuned, so noble, so passionate, what would be the shock of an unrequited love? Terrible it must be,—perhaps the more so at thus finding her rival in her own slave!

Strange confidante had I chosen for *my* secret! Strange ear into which I had poured the tale of my love! Oh, that I had not made my confession! What suffering had I caused this fair, this unfortunate lady!

Such painful reflections coursed through

my mind ; but there were others equally bitter, and with bitterness springing from a far different source. What would be the effect of the disclosure ? How would it affect our future—the future of myself and Aurore ? How would Eugénie act ? Towards me ? towards Aurore—*her slave* ?

My confession had received no response. The mute lips murmured neither reply nor adieu. I had gazed but a moment on the insensible form. Aurore had beckoned me away ; and I had left the room in a state of embarrassment and confusion—I scarce remembered how.

What would be the result ? I trembled to think. Bitterness, hostility, revenge ?

Surely a soul so pure, so noble, could not harbour such passions as these ?

“No,” thought I ; “Eugénie Besançon is too gentle, too womanly, to give way to them. Is there a hope that she may have pity on *me*, as I pity *her* ? Or is there not ? She is a Creole—she inherits the fiery pas-

sions of her race. Should these be aroused to jealousy, to revenge, her gratitude will soon pass away—her love be changed to scorn. *Her own slave!*”

Ah! I well understood the meaning of this relationship, though I cannot make it plain to you. You can ill comprehend the horrid feeling. Talk of a *mésalliance* of the aristocratic lord with the daughter of his peasant retainer, of the high-born dame with her plebeian groom—talk of the scandal and scorn to which such rare events give rise! All this is little—is mild, when compared with the positive disgust and horror felt for the “white” who would ally himself *in marriage* with a *slave*! No matter how white *she* be, no matter how beautiful—even lovely as Aurore—he who would make her his *wife* must bear her away from her native land, far from the scenes where she has hitherto been known! His *mistress*—ah! that is another affair. An alliance of this nature is pardonable.

The "society" of the South is satisfied with the *slave-mistress*; but the *slave-wife*—that is an impossibility, an incongruity not to be borne!

I knew that the gifted Eugénie was above the common prejudices of her class; but I should have expected too much to suppose that she was above *this one*. No; noble, indeed, must be the soul that could have thrown off this chain, coiled around it by education, by habit, by example, by every form of social life. Notwithstanding all—notwithstanding the relations that existed between herself and Aurore, I could not expect this much. Aurore was her companion, her friend; but still Aurore was *her slave*!

I trembled for the result. I trembled for our next interview. In the future I saw darkness and danger. I had but one hope, one joy—the love of Aurore!

* * * *

I rose from my sleepless couch. I dressed and ate my breakfast hurriedly, mechanically.

That finished, I was at a loss what to do next. Should I return to the plantation, and seek another interview with Eugénie? No—not then. I had not the courage. It would be better, I reflected, to permit some time to pass—a day or two—before going back. Perhaps Mademoiselle would send for me? Perhaps—— At all events, it would be better to allow some days to elapse. Long days they would be to me!

I could not bear the society of any one. I shunned conversation; although I observed, as on the preceding day, that I was the object of scrutiny—the subject of comment among the loungers of the “bar,” and my acquaintances of the billiard-room. To avoid them, I remained inside my room, and endeavoured to kill time by reading.

I soon grew tired of this chamber-life; and upon the third morning I seized my

gun, and plunged into the depth of the forest.

I moved amidst the huge pyramidal trunks of the cypresses, whose thick umbellated foliage, meeting overhead, shut out both sun and sky. The very gloom occasioned by their shade was congenial to my thoughts; and I wandered on, my steps guided rather by accident than design.

I did not search for game. I was not thinking of sport. My gun rested idly in the hollow of my arm. The raccoon, which in the more open woods is nocturnal, is here abroad by day. I saw the creature plunging his food into the waters of the bayou, and skulking around the trunks of the cypresses. I saw the opossum gliding along the fallen log, and the red squirrel, like a stream of fire, brushing up the bark of the tall tulip-tree. I saw the large "swamp-hare" leap from her form by the selvage of the cane-brake; and, still more tempting game, the fallow-deer twice bounded before

me, roused from its covert in the shady thickets of the pawpaw-trees. The wild turkey, too, in all the glitter of his metallic plumage, crossed my path; and upon the bayou, whose bank I for some time followed, I had ample opportunity of discharging my piece at the blue heron, or the egret, the summer duck or the snake-bird, the slender ibis or the stately crane. Even the king of winged creatures — the white-headed eagle — was more than once within range of my gun, screaming his maniac note among the tops of the tall taxodiums.

And still the brown tubes rested idly across my arm; nor did I once think of casting my eye along their sights. No ordinary game could have tempted me to interrupt the current of my thoughts, that were dwelling upon a theme to me the most interesting in the world — Aurore the quadroon !

CHAPTER II.

DREAMS.

YIELDING up my soul to its sweet love-dream, I wandered on—where and how long I cannot tell, for I had taken no note either of distance or direction.

I was roused from my reverie by observing a brighter light gleaming before me; and soon after I emerged from the darker shadow of the forest. My steps, chance-directed, had guided me into a pretty glade, where the sun shone warmly, and the ground was gay with flowers. It was a little wild garden, enamelled by blossoms of many colours, among which, bignonias and the showy corollas of the cotton-rose were conspicuous. Even the forest that bordered and enclosed

this little parterre was a forest of flowering trees. They were magnolias of several kinds; on some of which the large liliaceous blossoms had given place to the scarcely less conspicuous seed-cones of glowing red, whose powerful but pleasant odour filled the atmosphere around. Other beautiful trees grew alongside, mingling their perfume with that of the magnolias. Scarce less interesting were the "honey-locusts" (*gleditschias*), with their pretty pinnate leaves, and long purple-brown legumes; the Virginian lotus, with its oval amber-coloured drupes, and the singular bow-wood tree (*maclura*), with its large orange-like pericarps, reminding one of the *flora* of the tropics.

The Autumn was just beginning to paint the forest, and already some touches from his glowing palette appeared among the leaves of the sassafras laurel, the sumach (*rhus*), the persimmon (*diospyros*), the nymph-named tupelo, and those other species of

the American *sylva* that love to array themselves so gorgeously before parting with their deciduous foliage. Yellow, orange, scarlet, crimson, with many an intermediate tint, met the eye; and all these colours, flashing under the brilliant beams of a noon-day sun, produced an indescribable *coup-d'œil*. The scene resembled the gaudy picture-work of a theatre, more than the sober reality of a natural landscape.

I stood for some minutes wrapt in admiration. The dream of love in which I had been indulging became heightened in its effect; and I could not help thinking, that if Aurore were but present to enjoy that lovely scene—to wander with me over that flowery glade—to sit by my side under the shade of the magnolia-laurel—then, indeed, would my happiness be complete. Earth itself had no fairer scene than this. A very love-bower it appeared!

Nor was it unoccupied by lovers; for two pretty doves—birds emblematic of

the tender passion—sat side by side upon the bough of a tulip-tree, their bronzed throats swelling at intervals with soft amorous notes.

Oh, how I envied those little creatures ! How I should have rejoiced in a destiny like theirs ! Thus mated and happy—amidst bright flowers and sweet perfumes, loving the live-long day—loving through all their lives !

They deemed me an intruder, and rose on whirring wing at my approach. Perchance they feared my glittering gun. They had not need. I had no intention of harming them. Far was it from my heart to spoil their perfect bliss.

But no—they feared me not—else their flight would have been more distant. They only flitted to the next tree ; and there again, seated side by side, resumed their love-converse. Absorbed in mutual fondness, they had already forgotten my presence !

I followed to watch these pretty creatures

—the types of gentleness and love. I flung me on the grass, and gazed upon them, tenderly kissing and cooing. I envied their delight.

My nerves, that for days had been dancing with more than ordinary excitement, were now experiencing the natural reaction, and I felt weary. There was a drowsiness in the air—a narcotic influence produced by the combined action of the sun's rays and the perfume of the flowers. It acted upon my spirit, and I fell asleep.

* * * * *

I slept only about an hour, but it was a sleep of dreams ; and during that short period I passed through many scenes. Many a visionary tableau appeared before the eye of my slumbering soul, and then melted away. There were more or less characters in each ; but in all of them two were constant, both well defined in form and features. They were Eugénie and Aurore.

Gayarre, too, was in my dreams ; and the

ruffian overseer, and Scipio, and the mild face of Reigart, and what I could remember of the good Antoine. Even the unfortunate Captain of the boat, the boat herself, the Magnolia, and the scene of the wreck—all were reproduced with a painful distinctness!

But my visions were not all of a painful character. Some were the very opposite—scenes of bliss. In company with Aurore, I was wandering through flowery glades, and exchanging the sweet converse of mutual love. The very spot where I lay—the scene around me—was pictured in the dream.

Strangest of all, I thought that Eugénie was with us, and that she, too, was happy; that she had consented to my marrying Aurore, and had even assisted us in bringing about this happy consummation!

In this vision Gayarre was the fiend; and I thought that after awhile he endeavoured to drag Aurore from me. A struggle followed, and then the scene ended with confused abruptness.

* * * * *

A new tableau arose—a new vision. In this *Eugénie* played the part of the evil genius. I thought she had refused my request—refused to *sell Aurore*. I fancied her jealous, hostile, vengeful. I thought she was loading me with imprecations, my betrothed with threats. *Aurore* was weeping. It was a painful vision.

* * * * *

The scene changed again. *Aurore* and I were happy. She was *free*—she was now mine, and we were married. But there was a cloud upon our happiness. *Eugénie was dead!*

Yes, dead. I thought I was bending over her, and had taken her hand. Suddenly her fingers closed upon mine, and held them with a firm pressure. I thought that the contact was disagreeable; and I endeavoured to withdraw my hand, but could not. My fingers remained bound within that cold clammy grasp; and with

instrument,—by the envenomed fang of a serpent,—and *in one hour I might be dead!*

My first impulse was to pursue the snake and destroy it; but before I could act upon that impulse the reptile had escaped beyond my reach. A hollow log lay near,—the trunk of a large tulip-tree, with the heart-wood decayed and gone. The snake had made for this—no doubt its haunt—and before I could come up with it, I saw the long slimy body, with its rhomboid spots, disappear within the dark cavity. Another “sker-r-rr” reached my ears as it glided out of sight. It seemed a note of triumph, as if uttered to tantalize me!

The reptile was now beyond my reach, but its destruction would not have availed me. Its death could not counteract the effect of its poison already in my veins. I knew that well enough, but for all I would have killed it, had it been in my power to do so. I felt angry and vengeful.

This was but my first impulse. It sud-

denly became changed to a feeling of terror. There was something so weird in the look of the reptile, something so strange in the manner of its attack and subsequent escape, that, on losing sight of it, I became suddenly impressed with a sort of supernatural awe, —a belief that the creature was possessed of a fiendish intelligence!

Under this impression I remained for some moments in a state of bewilderment.

The sight of the blood, and the stinging sensation of the wound, soon brought me to my senses again, and admonished me of the necessity of taking immediate steps to procure an antidote to the poison. But what antidote?

What knew I of such things? I was but a classical scholar. True, I had lately given some attention to botanical studies; but my new knowledge extended only to the *trees* of the forest, and none of these with which I was acquainted possessed alexipharmic virtues. I knew nothing of

the herbaceous plants, the milkworts, and *aristolochias*, that would now have served me. The woods might have been filled with antidotal remedies, and I have died in their midst. Yes, I might have lain down upon a bed of Seneca root, and, amidst terrible convulsions, have breathed my last breath, without knowing that the rhizome of the humble plant crushed beneath my body would, in a few short hours, have expelled the venom from my veins, and given me life and health.

I lost no time in speculating upon such a means of safety. I had but one thought—and that was to reach Bringiers at the earliest possible moment. My hopes rested upon Reigart.

I hastily took up my gun; and, plunging once more under the dark shadows of the cypress trees, I hurried on with nervous strides. I ran as fast as my limbs would carry me; but the shock of terror I had experienced seemed to have enfeebled my whole

frame, and my knees knocked against each other as I went.

On I struggled, regardless of my weakness, regardless of everything but the thought of reaching Bringiers and Reigart. Over fallen trees, through dense canebreaks, through clumps of palmettoes and pawpaw thickets, I passed, dashing the branches from my path, and lacerating my skin at every step. Onward, through sluggish rivulets of water, through tough miry mud, through slimy pools, filled with horrid newts, and the spawn of the huge *rana pipiens*, whose hoarse loud croak at every step sounded ominous in my ear. Onward!

“Ho! whither am I going? Where is the path? where the tracks of my former footsteps? Not here—not there. Good God! I have lost them!—lost! lost!”

Quick as lightning came these thoughts. I looked around with eager glances. On every side I scanned the ground. I saw

no path, no tracks, but those I had just made. I saw no marks that I could remember. I had lost my way. Beyond a doubt I was lost!

A thrill of despair ran through me—the blood curdled cold in my veins at the thought of my peril.

No wonder. If lost in the forest, then was I lost indeed. A single hour might be enough. In that time the poison would do its work. I should be found only by the wolves and vultures. O God!

As if to make my horrid fate appear more certain, I now remembered to have heard that it was the very season of the year—the hot autumn—when the venom of the *crotalus* is most virulent, and does its work in the shortest period of time. Cases are recorded where in a single hour its bite has proved fatal.

“Merciful heaven!” thought I, “in another hour I shall be no more!” and the thought was followed by a groan.

The danger nerved me to renewed efforts. I turned back on my tracks. It seemed the best thing I could do ; for in the gloomy circle around, there was no point that indicated my approach to the open ground of the plantations. Not a bit of sky could I discover, — that welcome beacon to the wood-ranger, denoting the proximity of the clearings. Even the heaven above was curtained from my view ; and when I appealed to it in prayer, my eyes rested only upon the thick black foliage of the cypress-trees, with their mournful drapery of *tillandsia*.

I had no choice but to go back, and endeavour to find the path I had lost, or wander on trusting to mere chance.

I chose the former alternative. Again I broke through the cane-brakes and palmetto-thickets—again I forded sluggish bayous, and waded across muddy pools.

I had not proceeded more than a hundred yards on the back track, when that also became doubtful. I had passed over a reach

of ground higher and drier than the rest. Here no footprints appeared, and I knew not which way I had taken. I tried in several directions, but could not discover my way. I became confused, and at length completely bewildered. Again was I lost!

To have been lost in the forest under ordinary circumstances would have mattered little,—an hour or two of wandering—perhaps a night spent under the shade of some tree, with the slight inconvenience of a hungry stomach. But how very different was my prospect then, with the fearful thoughts that were pressing upon me! The poison was fast inoculating my blood. I fancied I already felt it crawling through my veins!

One more struggle to find the clearings!

I rushed on, now guided by chance. I endeavoured to keep in a straight line, but to no purpose. The huge pyramidal buttresses of the trees, so characteristic of these

coniferae, barred my way; and, in passing around them, I soon lost all knowledge of my direction.

I wandered on, now dragging wearily across the dull ditches, now floundering through tracts of swamp, or climbing over huge prostrate logs. In my passage I startled the thousand denizens of the dank forest, who greeted me with their cries. The qua bird screamed; the swamp-owl hooted; the bullfrog uttered his trumpet note; and the hideous alligator, horribly bellying from his gaunt jaws, crawled sulkily out of my way, at times appearing as if he would turn and assail me!

“Ho! yonder is light!—the sky!”

It was but a small patch of the blue heaven—a disc, not larger than a dining-plate. But, oh! you cannot understand with what joy I greeted that bright spot. It was the lighthouse to the lost mariner.

It must be the clearings? Yes, I could see the sun shining through the trees, and

the horizon open as I advanced. No doubt the plantations were before me. Once there I should soon cross the fields, and reach the town. I should yet be safe. Reigart would surely know how to extract the poison, or apply some antidote?

I kept on with bounding heart and straining eyes—on, for the bright meteor before me.

The blue spot grew larger—other pieces of sky appeared—the forest grew thinner as I advanced—I was drawing nearer to its verge.

The ground became firmer and drier at every step, and the timber of a lighter growth. The shapeless cypress “knees” no longer impeded my progress. I now passed among tulip-trees, dogwoods, and magnolias. Less densely grew the trunks, lighter and less shadowy became the foliage above; until at length I pushed through the last selvage of the underwood, and stood in the open sunshine.

A cry of agony rose upon my lips. It was wrung from me by despair. I had arrived at my point of starting—I was once more within the glade!

I sought not to go farther. Fatigue, disappointment, and chagrin, had for the moment paralysed my strength. I staggered forward to a prostrate trunk,—the very one which sheltered my reptile assassin!—and sat down in a state of irresolution and bewilderment.

It seemed as though I were destined to die in that lovely glade—amidst those bright flowers—in the midst of that scene I had so lately admired, and upon the very spot where I had received my fatal wound!

CHAPTER IV.

THE RUNAWAY.

MAN rarely yields up his life without an extreme effort to preserve it. Despair is a strong feeling, but there are those whose spirit it cannot prostrate. In later life mine own would not have given way to such circumstances as surrounded me at that time; but I was then young, and little experienced in peril.

The paralysis of my thoughts did not continue long. My senses returned again; and I resolved to make a new effort for the salvation of my life.

I had conceived no plan, further than to endeavour once more to escape out of the labyrinth of woods and morass in which I

had become entangled, and make as before for the village. I thought I knew the direction in which it lay, by observing the side at which I had first entered the glade. But, after all, there was no certainty in this. It was mere conjecture. I had entered the glade with negligent steps. I had strayed all around it before lying down to sleep. Perhaps I had gone around its sides before entering it—for I had been *wandering* all the morning.

While these reflections were passing rapidly through my mind, and despair once more taking possession of my spirits, I all at once remembered having heard that tobacco is a powerful antidote to snake poison. Strange the idea had not occurred to me before. But, indeed, there was nothing wonderful that it did not, as up to that moment I had only thought of making my way to Bringiers. With no reliance upon my own knowledge, I had thought only of a doctor. It was only when I became appre-

hensive of not being able to get to *him*, that I began to think of what resources lay within my reach. I now remembered the tobacco.

Quick as the thought my cigar-case was in my fingers. To my joy one cigar still remained, and drawing it out I proceeded to macerate the tobacco by chewing. This I had heard was the mode of applying it to the snake-bite.

Dry as was my mouth at first, the bitter weed soon supplied me with saliva, and in a few moments I had reduced the leaves to a pulp, though nauseated — almost poisoned by the powerful *nicotine*.

I laid the moistened mass upon my wrist, and at the same time rubbed it forcibly into the wound. I now perceived that my arm was sensibly swollen—even up to the elbow — and a singular pain began to be felt throughout its whole length! O God! the poison was spreading, surely and rapidly spreading! I fancied I could feel it like

liquid fire crawling and filtering through my veins!

Though I had made application of the nicotine, I had but little faith in it. I had only heard it casually talked of as a remedy. It might, thought I, be one of the thousand fancies that people love to indulge in; and I had only used it as a "forlorn hope."

I bound the mass to my wrist—a torn sleeve serving for lint; and then, turning my face in the direction I intended to take, I started off afresh.

I had scarce made three strides when my steps were suddenly arrested. I stopped on observing a man on the edge of the glade, and directly in front of me.

He had just come out of the underwood, towards which I was advancing, and, on perceiving me, had suddenly halted—perhaps surprised at the sight of one of his own kind in such a wild place.

I hailed his appearance with a shout of joy. "A guide!—a deliverer!" thought I.

What was my astonishment—my chagrin—my indignation—when the man suddenly turned his back upon me; and, plunging into the bushes, disappeared from my sight!

I was astounded at this strange conduct. I had just caught a glimpse of the man's face as he turned away. I had seen that he was a negro, and I had noticed that he appeared to be frightened. But what was there about *me* to terrify him?

I called out to him to stop—to come back. I shouted in tones of entreaty—of command—of menace. In vain. He made neither stop nor stay. I heard the branches crackle as he broke through the thicket—each moment the noise appearing more distant.

It was my only chance for a guide. I must not lose it; and, bracing myself for a run, I started after him.

If I possess any physical accomplishment in which I have confidence it is my fleetness of foot. At that time an Indian runner

could not have escaped me, much less a clumsy, long-heeled negro. I knew that if I could once more get my eyes upon the black, I would soon overhaul him; but therein lay the difficulty. In my hesitation I had given him a long start; and he was now out of sight in the depth of the thicket.

But I could hear him breaking through the bushes like a hog; and, guiding myself by the sound, I kept up the pursuit.

I was already somewhat jaded by my previous exertions; but the conviction that *my life depended on overtaking the negro* kindled my energies afresh, and I ran like a greyhound. Unfortunately it was not a question of simple speed, else the chase would soon have been brought to an end. It was in getting through the bushes, and dodging round the trunks of the trees, that the hindrance lay; and I had many a struggle among the branches, and many a zigzag turn to make, before I could get my eyes upon the object I was in pursuit of.

However, I at length succeeded in doing so. The underwood came to an end. The misshapen cypress trunks alone stood up out of the miry, black soil ; and far off, down one of their dark aisles, I caught sight of the negro, still running at the top of his speed. Fortunately his garments were light coloured, else under the sombre shadow I could not have made him out. As it was, I had only a glimpse of him, and at a good distance off.

But I had cleared the thicket, and could run freely. Swiftmess had now everything to do with the race ; and in less than five minutes after I was close upon the heels of the black, and calling to him to halt.

“ Stop ! ” I shouted. “ For God’s sake, stop ! ”

No notice was taken of my appeals. The negro did not even turn his head, but ran on, floundering through the mud.

“ Stop ! ” I repeated, as loudly as my exhausted breath would permit. “ Stop,

man ! why do you run from me ? I mean you no harm."

Neither did this speech produce any effect. No reply was given. If anything, I fancied that he increased his speed ; or rather, perhaps, he had got through the quagmire, and was running upon firm ground while I was just entering upon the former.

I fancied that the distance between us was again widening ; and began to fear he might still elude me. I felt that my life was on the result. Without him to guide me from the forest, I would miserably perish. He *must* guide me. Willing or unwilling, I should force him to the office.

"Stop," I again cried out ; "halt, or I fire !"

I had raised my gun. Both barrels were loaded. I had spoken in all seriousness. I should in reality have fired—not to kill, but to detain him. The shot might injure him, but I could not help it. I had

no choice—no other means of saving my own life.

I repeated the awful summons :—

“ Stop—or I fire ! ”

This time my tone was earnest. It left no doubt of my intention ; and this seemed to be the impression it produced upon the black ; for, suddenly halting in his tracks, he wheeled about, and stood facing me.

“ Fire ! an be dam ! ” cried he ; “ have a care, white man—don’t you miss. By Goramighty ! if ya do, your life’s mine. See dis knife ! fire now an be dam ! ”

As he spoke he stood full fronting me, his broad chest thrown out as if courageously to receive the shot, and in his uplifted hand I saw the shining blade of a knife !

A few steps brought me close up ; and in the man that stood before me I recognised the form and ferocious aspect of *Gabriel, the Bambarra !*

CHAPTER V.

GABRIEL THE BAMBARRA.

THE huge stature of the black — his determined attitude—the sullen glare of his lurid bloodshot eyes, set in a look of desperate resolve — the white gleaming file-pointed teeth—rendered him a terrible object to behold. Under other circumstances I might have dreaded an encounter with such an hideous-looking adversary—for an *adversary* I deemed him. I remembered the flogging I had given him with my whip, and I had no doubt that *he* remembered it too. I had no doubt that he was now upon his errand of revenge—instigated partly by the insult I had put upon him,

and partly set on by his cowardly master. He had been dogging me through the forest—all the day, perhaps—waiting for an opportunity to execute his purpose.

But why had he run away from me? Was it because he feared to attack me openly? Certainly it was—he feared my double-barrelled gun!

But I had been asleep. He might have approached me then—he might have——
Ha!

This ejaculation escaped my lips, as a singular thought flashed into my mind. The Bambarra was a “snake-charmer”—I had heard so—could handle the most venomous serpents at will—could guide and direct them! Was it not he who had guided the *crotalus* to where I lay—who had caused me to be bitten?

Strange as it may appear, this supposition at that moment crossed my mind, and seemed probable; nay, more—I actually *believed it*. I remembered that I had been struck with

a peculiarity about the reptile — its weird look—the superior cunning exhibited in its mode of escape—and not less peculiar the fact of its having stung me unprovoked—a rare thing for the rattlesnake to do! All these points rushing simultaneously into my mind, produced the conviction that for the fatal wound on my wrist I was indebted, not to chance, but to Gabriel the snake-charmer!

Not half the time I have been telling you of it—not the tenth, nor the hundredth part of the time, was I in forming this horrid conviction. It was done with the rapidity of thought — the more rapid that every circumstance guiding to such a conclusion was fresh in my memory. In fact the black had not changed his attitude of menace, nor I mine of surprise at recognising him, until all these thoughts had passed through my mind!

Almost with equal rapidity was I disabused of the singular delusion. In another

minute I became aware that my suspicions were unjust. I had been wronging the man who stood before me.

All at once his attitude changed. His uplifted arm fell by his side; the expression of fierce menace disappeared; and in as mild a tone as his rough voice was capable of giving utterance to, he said:—

“ Oh! you, mass’—brack man’s friend! Dam! thought ’twar da ’cussed yankee driber!”

“ And was that why you ran from me?”

“ Ye, mass’; ob course it war.”

“ Then you are ——”

“ Am runaway; ye, mass’, jes so — runaway. Don’t mind tell you. Gabr’l truss you—He know you am poor nigga’s friend. Look-ee-dar!”

As he uttered this last phrase, he pulled off the scanty copper-coloured rag of a shirt that covered his shoulders, and bared his back before my eyes!

A horrid sight it was. Besides the *fleur-*

de-lis and many other old brands, there were scars of more recent date. Long wales, purple-red and swollen, traversed the brown skin in every direction, forming a perfect network. Here they were traceable by the darker colour of the extravasated blood, while there the flesh itself lay bare, where it had been exposed to some prominent fold of the spirally-twisted cow-skin. The old shirt itself was stained with black blotches that had once been red—the blood that had oozed out during the infliction! The sight sickened me, and called forth the involuntary utterance,—

“ Poor fellow ! ”

This expression of sympathy evidently touched the rude heart of the Bambarra.

“ Ah, mass’ ! ” he continued, “ you flog me with hosswhip—dat nuffin ! Gabr’l bress you for dat. He pump water on ole Zip *’gainst him will*—glad when young mass’ druv im way from de pump.”

“ Ha ! you were forced to it, then ? ”

“Ye, mass’, forced by da yankee driber. Try make me do so odder time. I ’fuse punish Zip odder time—dat’s why you see dis yeer—dam !”

“You were flogged for refusing to punish Scipio ?”

“Jes so, mass’ Edwad; ’bused, as you see ; but ——” here the speaker hesitated, while his face resumed its fierce expression,—“but,” continued he, “I’s e had rebenge on de yankee—dam !”

“What ? — revenge ? What have you done to him ?”

“Oh, not much, mass.’ Knock im down ; he drop like a beef to de axe. Dat’s some rebenge to poor nigga. Beside, I’s e a runaway, *an’ dat’s rebenge*. Ha ! ha ! Dey lose good nigga — good hand in de cotton feel — good hand among de cane. Ha ! ha !”

The hoarse laugh with which the “runaway” expressed his satisfaction sounded strangely on my ear.

"And you have run away from the plantation?"

"Jes so, mass' Edwad — nebber go back." After a pause, headed, with increased emphasis,—" *Nebber go back 'live!*"

As he uttered these words he raised his hand to his broad chest, at the same time throwing his body into an attitude of earnest determination.

I saw at once that I had mistaken the character of this man. I had had it from his enemies, the whites, who feared him. With all the ferocity of expression that characterised his features, there was evidently something noble in his heart. He had been flogged for refusing to flog a fellow-slave. He had resented the punishment, and struck down his brutal oppressor. By so doing he had risked a far more terrible punishment — even life itself!

It required courage to do all this. A spirit of liberty alone could have inspired him with that courage — the same spirit

which impelled the Swiss patriot to strike down the cap of Gessler.

As the negro stood with his thick muscular fingers spread over his brawny chest, with form erect, with head thrown back, and eyes fixed in stern resolve, I was impressed with an air of grandeur about him, and could not help thinking that in the black form before me, scantily clad in coarse cotton, there was the soul and spirit of a man!

CHAPTER VI.

THE SNAKE-DOCTOR.

WITH admiring eyes I looked for some moments on this bold black man — this slave-hero. I might have gazed longer, but the burning sensation in my arm reminded me of my perilous situation.

“ You will guide me to Bringiers ? ” was my hurried interrogatory.

“ Daren’t, mass’.”

“ Daren’t ! Why ? ”

“ Mass’ forget I’s a runaway. White folk cotch Gabr’l—cut off him arm.”

“ What ? Cut off your arm ? ”

“ Saten sure, mass’ — dat’s da law of Loozyaney. White man strike nigga, folk laugh, folk cry out, ‘ Lap de dam nigga !

lap him !' Nigga strike white man, cut off nigga's arm. Like berry much to 'bleege mass' Edwad, but daren't go to de clearins. White men after Gabr'l last two days. Cuss'd blood-dogs and nigga-hunters out on im track. Thought young mass' war one o' dem folks ; dat's why um run."

" If you do not guide me, then I must die."

" Die !—die ! wha for mass' say dat ?"

" Because I am lost. I cannot find my way out of the forest. If I do not reach the doctor in less than twenty minutes, there is no hope. O God !"

" Doctor !—mass' Edwad sick ? What ail 'um ? Tell Gabr'l. If dat's da case, him guide de brack man's friend at risk ob life. What young mass' ail ?"

" See ! I have been bitten by a rattle-snake."

I bared my arm, and showed the wound and the swelling.

" Ho ! dat indeed ! sure 'nuff—it are da

bite ob de rattlesnake. Doctor no good for dat. Tobbac' juice no good. Gabr'l best doctor for de rattlesnake. Come 'long, young mass'!"

"What! you are going to guide me, then?"

"I'se a gwine to *cure* you, mass'."

"You?"

"Ye, mass'! tell you doctor no good—know nuffin' 't all 'bout it—he kill you—truss Ole Gabe—he cure you. Come 'long, mass', no time t' be loss."

I had for the moment forgotten the peculiar reputation which the black enjoyed—that of a snake-charmer and snake-doctor as well, although I had so late been thinking of it. The remembrance of this fact now returned, accompanied by a very different train of reflections.

"No doubt," thought I, "he possesses the requisite knowledge—knows the antidote, and how to apply it. No doubt he is

the very man. The doctor, as he says, may not understand how to treat me."

I had no very great confidence that the doctor could cure me. I was only running to him as a sort of *dernier ressort*.

"This Gabriel—this snake-charmer, is the very man. How fortunate I should have met with him!"

After a moment's hesitation—during the time these reflections were passing through my mind—I called out to the black—

"Lead on! I follow you!"

Whither did he intend to guide me? What was he going to do? Where was he to find an antidote? How was he to cure me?

To these questions, hurriedly put, I received no reply.

"You truss me, mass' Edwad; you foller me!" were all the words the black would utter as he strode off among the trees.

I had no choice but to follow him.

After proceeding several hundred yards through the cypress swamp, I saw some spots of sky in front of us. This indicated an opening in the woods, and for that I saw my guide was heading. I was not surprised on reaching this opening to find that it was the glade—again the fatal glade!

To my eyes how changed its aspect! I could not bear the bright sun that gleamed into it. The sheen of its flowers wearied my sight—their perfume made me sick!

Maybe I only fancied this. I *was* sick, but from a very different cause. The poison was mingling with my blood. It was setting my veins on fire. I was tortured by a choking sensation of thirst, and already felt that spasmodic compression of the chest, and difficulty of breathing—the well-known symptoms experienced by the victims of snake-poison!

It may be that I only fancied most of this. I knew that a venomous serpent had

bitten me ; and that knowledge may have excited my imagination to an extreme susceptibility. Whether the symptoms did in reality exist, I suffered them all the same. My fancy had all the painfulness of reality !

My companion directed me to be seated. Moving about, he said, was not good. He desired me to be calm and patient, once more begging me to "truss Gabr'l."

I resolved to be quiet, though patient I could not be. My peril was too great.

Physically I obeyed him. I sat down upon a log—that same log of the liriodendron—and under the shade of a spreading dogwood-tree. With all the patience I could command, I sat awaiting the orders of the snake-doctor. He had gone off a little way, and was now wandering around the glade with eyes bent upon the ground. He appeared to be searching for something.

"Some plant," thought I, "he expects to find growing there."

I watched his movements with more than ordinary interest. I need hardly have said this. It would have been sufficient to say that I felt my life depended on the result of his search. His success or his failure were life or death to me.

How my heart leaped when I saw him bend forward, and then stoop still lower, as if clutching something upon the ground ! An exclamation of joy that escaped his lips was echoed in a louder key from my own ; and, forgetting his directions to remain quiet, I sprang up from the log, and ran towards him.

As I approached he was upon his knees, and with his knife-blade was digging around a plant, as if to raise it by the roots. It was a small herbaceous plant, with erect simple stem, oblong lanceolate leaves, and a terminal spike of not very conspicuous white flowers. Though I knew it not then, it was the famed "snake-root" (*Polygala senega*).

In a few moments he had removed the earth, and then, drawing out the plant, shook its roots free of the mould. I noticed that a mass of woody contorted rhizomes, somewhat thicker than those of the sarsaparilla briar, adhered to the stem. They were covered with ash-coloured bark, and quite inodorous. Amid the fibres of these roots lay the antidote to the snake poison—in their sap was the saviour of my life!

Not a moment was lost in preparing them. There were no hieroglyphics nor Latinic phraseology employed in the prescription of the snake-charmer. It was comprised in the phrase, "*Chaw it!*" and, along with this simple direction, a piece of the root scraped clear of the bark was put into my hand. I did as I was desired, and in a moment I had reduced the root to a pulp, and was swallowing its sanitary juices.

The taste was at first rather sweetish, and engendered a slight feeling of nausea; but, as I continued to chew, it became hot and

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pungent, producing a peculiar tingling sensation in the fauces and throat.

The black now ran to the nearest brook, filled one of his "brogans" with water, and, returning, washed my wrist until the tobacco juice was all removed from the wound. Having himself chewed a number of the leaves of the plant into a pulpy mass, he placed it directly upon the bitten part, and then bound up the wound as before.

Everything was now done that could be done. I was instructed to abide the result patiently and without fear.

* * * * *

In a very short time a profuse perspiration broke out over my whole body, and I began to expectorate freely. I felt, moreover, a strong inclination to vomit—which I should have done had I swallowed any more of the juice, for, taken in large doses, the seneca root is a powerful emetic.

But of the feelings I experienced at that

moment, the most agreeable was the belief that *I was cured!*

Strange to say, this belief almost at once impressed my mind with the force of a conviction. I no longer doubted the skill of the snake-doctor.

CHAPTER VII.

CHARMING THE CROTALUS.

I WAS destined to witness still further proofs of the wonderful capabilities of my new acquaintance.

I felt the natural joy of one whose life has been saved from destruction — singularly, almost miraculously saved. Like one who has escaped from drowning, from the field of slaughter, from the very jaws of death. The reaction was delightful. I felt gratitude, too, for him who had saved me. I could have embraced my sable companion, black and fierce as he was, like a brother.

We sat side by side upon the log, and chatted gaily;—gaily as men may whose

future is dark and unsettled. Alas ! it was so with both of us. Mine had been dark for days past ; and his—what was his, poor helot ?

But even in the gloom of sadness the mind has its moments of joy. Nature has not allowed that grief may be continuous, and at intervals the spirit must soar above its sorrows. Such an interval was upon me then. Joy and gratitude were in my heart. I had grown fond of this slave,—this runaway slave,—and was for the moment happy in his companionship.

It was natural our conversation should be of snakes and snake-roots, and many a strange fact he imparted to me relating to reptile life. A herpetologist might have envied me the hour I spent upon that log in the company of Gabriel the Bambarra.

In the midst of our conversation my companion abruptly asked the question, whether I had killed the snake that had bitten me.

"No," I replied. "It escaped."

"'Scaped, mass'! whar did um go?"

"It took shelter in a hollow log,—the very one on which we are seated."

The eyes of the negro sparkled with delight.

"Dam!" exclaimed he, starting to his feet; "mass' say snake in dis yeer log? Dam!" he repeated, "if de varmint yeer in dis log, Gabr'l soon fotch 'im out."

"What! you have no axe?"

"Dis nigga axe no want for dat."

"How, then, can you get at the snake? Do you intend to set fire to the log?"

"Ho! fire no good. Dat log burn whole month. Fire no good: smoke white men see,—b'lieve 'im runaway,—den come de blood-dogs. Dis nigga daren't make no fire."

"How, then?"

"Wait a bit, mass' Edwad, you see. Dis nigga fotch de rattlesnake right out ob 'im boots. Please, young mass', keep still; don't

speak 'bove de breff : ole varmint, he hear ebbery word."

The black now talked in whispers, as he glided stealthily around the log. I followed his directions, and remained perfectly "still," watching every movement of my singular companion.

Some young reeds of the American bamboo (*Arundo gigantea*) were growing near. A number of these he cut down with his knife; and then, sharpening their lower ends, stuck them into the ground, near the end of the log. He arranged the reeds in such a manner that they stood side by side, like the strings of a harp, only closer together. He next chose a small sapling from the thicket, and trimmed it so that nothing remained but a straight wand with a forked end. With this in one hand, and a piece of split cane in the other, he placed himself flat along the log, in such a position that his face

was directly over the entrance to the cavity. He was also close to the row of canes, so that with his outstretched hand he could conveniently reach them. His arrangements were now completed, and the "charm" commenced.

Laying aside the forked sapling ready to his hand, he took the piece of split reed, and drew it backward and forward across the row of upright canes. This produced a sound which was an exact imitation of the "skerr" of the rattlesnake; so like, that a person hearing it, without knowing what caused it, would undoubtedly have mistaken it for the latter; so like, that the black knew the reptile itself would be deceived by it! He did not, however, trust to this alone to allure his victim. Aided by an instrument which he had hastily constructed out of the lanceolate leaves of the cane, he at the same time imitated the scream and chatter of the red cardinal (*Loxia cardinalis*), just as when that bird

is engaged in battle, either with a serpent, an opossum, or some other of its habitual enemies.

The sounds produced were exactly similar to those often heard in the depths of the American forest, when the dread *crotalus* plunders the nest of the Virginia nightingale.

The stratagem proved successful. In a few moments the lozenge-shaped head of the reptile appeared outside the cavity. Its forking tongue was protruded at short intervals, and its small dark eyes glittered with rage. Its rattle could be heard, announcing its determination to take part in the fray—which it supposed was going on outside.

It had glided out nearly the full length of its body, and seemed to have discovered the deception, for it was turning round to retreat. But the *crotalus* is one of the most sluggish of snakes; and, before it could get back within the log, the forked sapling

descended upon its neck, and pinned it fast to the ground!

Its body now writhed over the grass in helpless contortions—a formidable creature to behold. It was a snake of largest size for its species, being nearly eight feet in length, and as thick as the wrist of the Bambarra himself. Even he was astonished at its proportions; and assured me it was the largest of its kind he had ever encountered.

I expected to see the black put an end to its struggles at once by killing it; and I essayed to help him with my gun.

“No, mass’,” cried he, in a tone of entreaty, “for lub ob de Ormighty! don’t fire de gun. Mass’ forget dat dis poor nigga am runaway.”

I understood his meaning, and lowered the piece.

“B’side,” continued he, “I’se got some-thin’ show mass’ yet—he like see curious thing—he like see de big snake trick?”

I replied in the affirmative.

“Well, den, please, mass’, hold dis stick. I for something go. Jes now berry curious plant I see—berry curious—berry scace dat plant. I seed it in de cane-brake. Catch ’old, mass’, while I go get um.”

I took hold of the sapling, and held it as desired, though not without some apprehension of the hideous reptile that curled and writhed at my feet. I had no need to fear, however. The fork was exactly across the small of the creature’s neck, and it could not raise its head to strike me. Large as it was, there was no danger from anything but its fangs; for the *crotalus*, unlike serpents of the genus *constrictor*, possesses but a very feeble power of compression.

Gabriel had gone off among the bushes, and in a few minutes I saw him returning. He carried in his hand a plant which, as before, he had pulled up by the roots. Like the former, it was a herbaceous plant, but of a very different appearance.

The leaves of this one were heart-shaped and acuminate, its stem sinuous, and its flowers of a dark purple colour.

As the black approached, I saw that he was chewing some parts both of the leaves and root. What did he mean to do?

I was not left long in suspense. As soon as he had arrived upon the ground, he stooped down, and spat a quantity of the juice over the head of the snake. Then, taking the sapling out of my hand, he plucked it up and flung it away.

To my dismay, the snake was now set free ; and I lost no time in springing backward, and mounting upon the log.

Not so my companion, who once more stooped down, caught hold of the hideous reptile, fearlessly raised it from the ground, and flung it around his neck as coolly as if it had been a piece of rope !

The snake made no effort to bite him. Neither did it seem desirous of escaping from his grasp. It appeared rather to be

stupefied, and without the power of doing injury !

After playing with it for some moments, the Bambarra threw it back to the ground. Even there it made no effort to escape !

The charmer now turned to me, and said, in a tone of triumph,

“ Now, mass’ Edwad, you shall hab re-benge. Look at dis ! ”

As he spoke he pressed his thumb against the fauces of the serpent, until its mouth stood wide open. I could plainly see its terrible fangs and poison glands. Then, holding its head close up to his lips, he injected the dark saliva into its throat, and once more flung it to the ground. Up to this time he had used no violence—nothing that would have killed a creature so retentive of life as a snake ; and I still expected to see the reptile make its escape. Not so, however. It made no effort to move from the spot, but lay stretched out in loose irregular folds, without any per-

ceptible motion beyond a slight quivering of the body. In less than two minutes after, this motion ceased ; and the snake had all the appearance of being dead !

"It am dead, mass'," replied the black to my inquiring glance, "dead as Julium Cæsar."

"And what is this plant, Gabriel?"

"Ah, dat is a great yerb, mass'; dat is a scace plant—a berry scace plant. Eat some ob dat—no snake bite you, as you jes seed. Dat is de plant ob de *snake-charmer*."

The botanical knowledge of my sable companion went no farther. In after years, however, I was enabled to classify his "charm," which was no other than the *Aristolochia serpentaria*—a species closely allied to the "bejuco de guaco," that alexipharmic rendered so celebrated by the pens of Mutis and Humboldt.

My companion now desired me, to chew some of the roots ; for though he had every

confidence in the other remedy, he deemed it no harm to make assurance doubly sure. He extolled the virtues of the new-found plant, and told me he should have administered it instead of the seneca root, but he had despaired in finding it—as it was of much more rare occurrence in that part of the country.

I eagerly complied with his request, and swallowed some of the juice. Like the seneca root, it tasted hot and pungent, with something of the flavour of spirits of camphor. But the polygala is quite inodorous, while the guaco gives forth a strong aromatic smell, resembling valerian.

I had already experienced relief—this would have given it to me almost instantaneously. In a very short time the swelling completely subsided; and had it not been for the binding around my wrist, I should have forgotten that I had been wounded.

CHAPTER VIII.

KILLING A TRAIL.

AN hour or more we had spent since entering the glade—now no longer terrible. Once more its flowers looked bright, and their perfume had recovered its sweetness. Once more the singing of the birds and the hum of the insect-world fell soothingly upon my ears; and there, as before, sat the pretty doves, still repeating their soft “co-co-a”—the endearing expression of their loves.

I could have lingered long in the midst of this fair scene—long have enjoyed its sylvan beauty; but the intellectual must ever yield to the physical. I felt sensations of hunger, and soon the appetite began to distress me.

Where was I to obtain relief from this pain—where obtain food? I could not ask my companion to guide me to the plantations, now that I knew the risk he would run in so doing. I knew that it really was as he had stated—*the loss of an arm, perhaps of life, should he be caught*. There was but little hope of mercy for him—the less so as he had no master with power to protect him, and who might be *interested* in his not being thus crippled!

By approaching the open country on the edge of the clearings, he would not only run the hazard of being seen, but, what he feared still more, being *tracked by hounds*! This mode of searching for “runaways” was not uncommon, and there were even white men base enough to follow it as a calling! So learnt I from my companion. His information was afterwards confirmed *by my own experience*!

I was hungry—what was to be done? I could not find my way alone. I might again

get lost, and have to spend the night in the swamp. What had I best do?

I appealed to my companion. He had been silent for some time—busy with his thoughts. They were running on the same subject as my own. The brave fellow had not forgotten me.

“Jes what dis nigga am thinkin’ ’bout,” replied he. “Well, mass’,” he continued, “when sun go down, den I guide you safe—no fear den. Gabr’l take you close to de Lebee road. Mass’ must wait till sun go down.”

“But ——”

“Mass’ hungry?” inquired he, interrupting me.

I assented.

“Jes thot so. Dar’s nuffin’ yeer to eat ’cept dis ole snake. Mass’ no care to eat snake: dis nigga eat ’im. Cook ’im at night, when smoke ob de fire not seen ober de woods. Got place to cook ’im, mass’

see. Gabr'l truss mass' Edwad. He take 'im to caboose ob de runaway."

He had already cut off the head of the reptile while he was talking; and having pinned neck and tail together with a sharp stick, he lifted the glittering body, and, flinging it over his shoulders, stood ready to depart.

"Come, now, mass'," continued he, "come 'long wi' Ole Gabe; he find you somethin' to eat."

So saying, he turned round and walked off into the bushes.

I took up my gun and followed. I could not do better. To have attempted to find my own way back to the clearings might again have resulted in failure, since I had twice failed. I had nothing to hurry me back. It would be quite as well if I returned to the village after night—the more prudent course, in fact—as then my mud-bedaubed and blood-stained habiliments would

be less likely to attract attention ; and this I desired to avoid. I was contented, therefore, to follow the runaway to his "lair," and share it with him till after sunset.

For some hundred yards he led on in silence. His eyes wandered around the forest, as though he was seeking for something. They were not directed upon the ground, but upward to the trees ; and, therefore, I knew it was not the path he was in search of.

A slight exclamation escaped him, and, suddenly turning in his tracks, he struck off in a direction different to that we had been following. I walked after ; and now saw that he had halted by a tall tree, and was looking up among its branches.

The tree was the frankincense, or loblolly pine (*Pinus tæda*). That much of botany I knew. I could tell the species by the large spinous cones and light-green needles. Why had he stopped there ?

"Mass' Edwad soon see," he said, in an-

swer to my interrogatory. "Please, mass'," he continued, "hold de snake a bit—don't let um touch de groun'—dam dogs, dey smell um!"

I relieved him of his burden; and, holding it as desired, stood watching him in silence.

The loblolly pine grows with a straight naked shaft, and pyramidal head, often without branches, to the height of fifty feet. In this case, however, several fronds stood out from the trunk at less than twenty feet from the ground. These were loaded with large green cones, full five inches in length; and it appeared to be these that my companion desired to obtain—though for what purpose I had not the remotest idea.

After a while he procured a long pole; and with the end of this knocked down several of the cones, along with pieces of the branchlets to which they adhered.

As soon as he believed he had a sufficient

quantity for his purpose, he desisted, and flung the pole away.

What next? I watched with increasing interest.

He now gathered up both the cones and the adhering spray; but, to my surprise, he flung the former away. It was not the cones, then, he wanted, but the young shoots that grew on the very tops of the branches. These were of a brownish-red colour, and thickly coated with resin—for the *Pinus tæda* is more resinous than any tree of its kind—emitting a strong aromatic odour, which has given to it one of its trivial names.

Having collected the shoots, until he had both hands full, my guide now bent down, and rubbed the resin over both the soles and upper surface of his coarse brogans. He then advanced to where I stood, stooped down again, and treated my boots to a similar polishing!

“Now, mass’, all right—de dam blood-

dogs no scent Ole Gabe now—dat *kill de trail*. Come, mass' Edwad—come 'long!"

Saying this, he again shouldered the snake and started off, leaving me to follow in his tracks.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PIROGUE.

WE soon after entered the *cyprière*. There the surface was mostly without underwood. The black taxodiums, standing thickly, usurped the ground, their umbellated crowns covered with hoary epiphytes, whose pendulous drapery shut out the sun, that would otherwise have nourished on that rich soil a luxuriant herbaceous vegetation. But we were now within the limits of the annual inundation; and but few plants can thrive there.

After a while I could see we were approaching a stagnant water. There was no perceptible descent; but the dank damp odour of the swamp, the noise of the piping

frogs, the occasional scream of some wading bird, or the bellowing of the alligator, admonished me that some constant water—some lake or pond—was near.

We were soon upon its margin. It was a large pond, though only a small portion of it came under the eye; for, as far as I could see, the cypress-trees grew up out of the water, their huge buttresses spreading out so as almost to touch each other! Here and there the black “knees” protruded above the surface, their fantastic shapes suggesting the idea of horrid water-demons, and lending a supernatural character to the scene. Thus canopied over, the water looked black as ink, and the atmosphere felt heavy and oppressive. The picture was one from which Dante might have drawn ideas for his “Inferno.”

On arriving near this gloomy pond, my guide came to a stop. A huge tree that had once stood near the edge had fallen, and in such a position that its top extended

far out into the water. Its branches were yet undecayed, and the parasites still clung to them in thick tufts, giving the whole the appearance of a mass of hay loosely thrown together. Part of this was under water, but a still larger portion remained above the surface, high and dry. It was at the root of this fallen tree that my guide had halted.

He remained but a moment, waiting only until I came up.

As soon as I had reached the spot, he mounted upon the trunk ; and, beckoning me to follow him, walked along the log in the direction of its top. I climbed up, and, balancing myself as well as I could, followed him out into the water.

On reaching the head of the tree, we entered among the thick limbs ; and, winding around these, kept still farther towards the top branches. I expected that there we should reach our resting-place.

At length my companion came to a stop,

and I now saw, to my astonishment, a small "pirogue" resting upon the water, and hidden under the moss! So completely was it concealed, that it was not possible to have seen it from any point except that where we now stood.

"This, then," thought I, "is the object for which we have crawled out upon the tree."

The sight of the pirogue led me to conjecture that we had farther to go. The black now loosed the canoe from its moorings, and beckoned me to get in.

I stepped into the frail craft and sat down. My companion followed, and, laying hold of the branches, impelled the vessel outward till it was clear of the tops of the tree. Then, seizing the paddle, under its repeated strokes we passed silently over the gloomy surface of the water.

For the first two or three hundred yards our progress was but slow. The cypress knees, and huge "buttocks" of the trees,

stood thickly in the way, and it was necessary to observe some caution in working the pirogue through among them. But I saw that my companion well understood the *manège* of his craft, and wielded a "paddle" with the skill of a Chippewa. He had the reputation of being a great "'coon hunter" and "bayou fisherman;" and in these pursuits no doubt he had picked up his canoe-craft.

It was the most singular voyage I had ever made. The pirogue floated in an element that more resembled ink than water. Not a ray of sun glanced across our path. The darkness of twilight was above and around us.

We glided along shadowy aisles, and amidst huge black trunks that rose like columns supporting a canopy of close-woven fronds. From this vegetable roo hung the mournful *bromelia*, sometimes drooping down to the very surface of the

water, so as to sweep our faces and shoulders as we passed under it.

We were not the only living things. Even this hideous place had its denizens. It was the haunt, and secure abode of the great *saurian*, whose horrid form could be distinguished in the gloom, now crawling along some prostrate trunk, now half mounted upon the protruding knees of the cypresses, or swimming with slow and stealthy stroke through the black liquid. Huge water-snakes could be seen, causing a tiny ripple as they passed from tree to tree, or lying coiled upon the projecting buttocks. The swamp-owl hovered on silent wing, and large brown bats pursued their insect prey. Sometimes these came near, fluttering in our very faces, so that we could perceive the mephitic odour of their bodies, while their horny jaws gave forth a noise like the clinking of castanets.

The novelty of the scene interested me;

but I could not help being impressed with a slight feeling of awe. Classic memories, too, stirred within me. The fancies of the Roman poet were here realized. I was upon the Styx, and in my rower I recognised the redoubtable Charon.

Suddenly a light broke through the gloom. A few more strokes of the paddle, and the pirogue shot out into the bright sunlight. What a relief!

I now beheld a space of open water,—a sort of circular lake. It was in reality *the* lake, for what we had been passing over was but the inundation; and at certain seasons this portion covered with forest became almost dry. The open water, on the contrary, was constant, and too deep even for the swamp-loving cypress to grow in it.

The space thus clear of timber was not of very large extent,—a surface of half-a-mile or so. On all sides it was enclosed by the moss-draped forest that rose around

it, like a grey wall ; and in the very centre grew a clump of the same character, that in the distance appeared to be an island.

This solitary tarn was far from being silent. On the contrary, it was a scene of stirring life. It seemed the favourite rendezvous for the many species of wild winged creatures that people the great *marais* of Louisiana. There were the egrets, the ibises—both white and scarlet—the various species of *Ardeidæ*, the cranes, and the red flamingoes. There, too, was the singular and rare darter, swimming with body immersed, and snake-like head just appearing above the water ; and there were the white unwieldy forms of the tyrant pelicans standing on the watch for their finny prey. Swimming birds speckled the surface ; various species of *Anatidæ*—swans, geese, and ducks,—while the air was filled with flights of gulls and curlews, or was cut by the strong whistling wings of the mallards.

Other than waterfowl had chosen this se-

cluded spot for their favourite dwelling-place. The osprey could be seen wheeling about in the air, now shooting down like a star upon the unfortunate fish that had approached too near the surface, and anon yielding up his prey to the tyrant *Haliaetus*. Such were the varied forms of feathered creatures that presented themselves to my eye on entering this lonely lake of the woods.

I looked with interest upon the scene. It was a true scene of nature, and made a vivid impression upon me at the moment. Not so with my companion, to whom it was neither novel nor interesting. It was an old picture to his eyes, and he saw it from a different point of view. He did not stay to look at it, but, lightly dipping his paddle, pressed the pirogue on in the direction of the island.

A few strokes carried us across the open water, and the canoe once more entered under the shadow of trees. But to my

surprise, *there was no island!* What I had taken for an island was but a single cypress-tree, that grew upon a spot where the lake was shallow. Its branches extending on every side were loaded with the hoary parasites that drooped down to the very surface of the water, and shadowed a space of half an acre in extent. Its trunk rested upon a base of enormous dimensions. Huge buttresses flanked it on every side, slanting out into the water and rising along its stem to a height of many yards, the whole mass appearing as large as an ordinary cabin. Its sides were indented with deep bays; and, as we approached under the screen, I could perceive a dark cavity which showed that this singular "buttock" was hollow within.

The bow of the pirogue was directed into one of the bays, and soon struck against the tree. I saw several steps cut into the wood, and leading to the cavity above. My companion pointed to these steps. The

screaming of the startled birds prevented me from hearing what he said, but I saw that it was a sign for me to mount upward. I hastened to obey his direction; and, climbing out of the canoe, sprawled up the sloping ridge.

At the top was the entrance, just large enough to admit the body of a man; and, pressing through this, I stood inside the hollow tree.

We had reached our destination—I was in the *lair of the runaway!*

CHAPTER X.

THE TREE-CAVERN.

THE interior was dark, and it was some time before I could distinguish any object. Presently my eyes became accustomed to the sombre light, and I was enabled to trace the outlines of this singular tree-cavern.

Its dimensions somewhat astonished me. A dozen men could have been accommodated in it, and there was ample room for that number either sitting or standing. In fact, the whole pyramidal mass which supported the tree was nothing more than a thin shell, all the heart having perished by decay. The floor, by the falling of this *débris* of rotten wood, was raised above the

level of the water, and felt firm and dry underfoot. Near its centre I could perceive the ashes and half-burnt embers of an extinct fire; and along one side was strewed a thick covering of dry *tillandsia*, that had evidently been used as a bed. An old blanket lying upon the moss gave further testimony that this was its purpose.

There was no furniture. A rude block, — a cypress knee that had been carried there — formed the only substitute for a chair, and there was nothing to serve for a table. He who had made this singular cave his residence required no luxuries to sustain him. Necessaries, however, he had provided. As my eyes grew more accustomed to the light, I could make out a number of objects I had not at first seen. An earthen cooking-pot, a large water gourd, a tin cup, an old axe, some fishing-tackle, and one or two coarse rags of clothing. What interested me more

than all these was the sight of several articles that were *eatable*. There was a good-sized "chunk" of cooked pork, a gigantic "pone" of corn-bread, several boiled ears of maize, and the better half of a roast fowl. All these lay together upon a large wooden dish, rudely carved from the wood of the tulip-tree—of such a fashion as I had often observed about the cabins of the negro quarter. Beside this dish lay several immense egg-shaped bodies of dark green colour, with other smaller ones of a yellow hue. These were water and musk melons,—not a bad prospect for a dessert.

I had made this reconnaissance while my companion was engaged in fastening his pirogue to the tree. I had finished my survey as he entered.

"Now, mass'," said he, "dis am ole Gabe's nest; de dam man-hunter no found 'im year."

"Why, you are quite at home here, Gabriel! How did you ever find such a place?"

"Lor, mass', knowd it long time. He not de fust darkie who, hid in dis old cypress,—nor de fust time for Gabr'l neider. He runaway afore,—dat war when he libbed with Mass' Hicks, 'fore ole mass' bought him. He nebber had 'casion to run away from old Mass' 'Sançon. He good to de brack folks, and so war Mass' Antoine—he good too, but now de poor nigga can't stan no longer; de new oberseer, he flog hard,—he flog till de blood come,—he use de cobb'n board, an dat pump, an de red cowhide, an de wagon whip,—ebb'rything he use,—dam! I nebber go back,—nebber!"

"But how do you intend to live? you can't always exist in this way. Where will you get your provisions?"

"Nebber fear, mass' Edwad, always get nuff to eat; no fear for dat. Da poor

runaway hab some friend on de plantations. Beside he steal nuff to keep 'im 'live — hya! hya!"

" Oh!"

" Gabr'l no need steal now, 'ceptin' de roastin' yeers and de millyuns. See! what Zip fotch im! Zip come las night to de edge ob de woods an' fotch all dat plunder. But, mass', you 'skoose me. Forgot you am hungry. Hab some pork, some chicken. Chloe cook 'em—is good—you eat."

So saying he set the wooden platter with its contents before me; and the conversation was now interrupted, as both myself and my companion attacked the viands with right good-will.

The "millyuns" constituted a delicious dessert, and for a full half-hour we continued to fight against the appetite of hunger. We conquered it at length, but not until the store of the runaway had been greatly reduced in bulk.

After dinner we sat conversing for a long

time. We were not without the soothing nicotian weed. My companion had several bunches of dry tobacco-leaf among his stores; and a corn-cob with a piece of cane-joint served for a pipe, through which the smoke was inhaled with all the aromatic fragrance of the costliest Havanna.

Partly from gratitude for the saving of my life, I had grown to feel a strong interest in the runaway, and his future prospects became the subject of our converse. He had formed no plan of escape—though some thoughts of an attempt to reach Canada or Mexico, or to get off in a ship by New Orleans, had passed through his mind.

A plan occurred to me, though I did not communicate it to him, as I might never be able to carry it out. I begged of him, however, not to leave his present abode until I could see him again, promising that I should do what I could to find him a kinder master.

He readily agreed to my proposal; and

as it was now sunset, I made preparations for my departure from the lake.

A signal was agreed upon, so that when I should return to visit him, he could bring the pirogue to ferry me across; and this being arranged, we once more entered the canoe, and set out for the plantations.

We soon recrossed the lake; and, leaving the little boat safely moored by the fallen tree, started off through the woods. The path, with Gabriel for my guide, was now easy; and at intervals, as we went along, he directed my attention to certain blazes upon the trees, and other marks by which I should know it again.

In less than an hour after, we parted on the edge of the clearings—he going to some rendezvous already appointed—whilst I kept on to the village, the road to which now ran between parallel fences that rendered it impossible for me to go astray.

CHAPTER XI.

HOTEL GOSSIP.

It was yet early when I entered the village. I glided stealthily through the streets, desirous to avoid observation. Unfortunately I had to pass through the bar of the hotel in order to reach my room. It was just before the hour of supper, and the guests had assembled in the bar saloon and around the porch.

My tattered habiliments, in places stained with blood, and profusely soiled with mud, could not escape notice; nor did they. Men turned and gazed after me. Loiterers looked with eyes that expressed their astonishment. Some in the portico, and others in the bar, hailed me as I passed, asking me

where I had been to. One cried out :
“Hillo, mister ! you’ve had a tussle with
the cats : hain’t you ?”

I did not make reply. I pushed on up
stairs, and found relief in the privacy of my
chamber.

I had been badly torn by the bushes.
My wounds needed dressing. I despatched
a messenger for Reigart. Fortunately he was
at home, and in a few minutes followed my
messenger to the hotel. He entered my
room, and stood staring at me with a look
of surprise.

“My dear R——, where have you
been ?” he inquired at length.

“To the swamp.”

“And these wounds—your clothes torn
—blood ?”

“Thorn-scratches—that’s all.”

“But where have you been ?”

“In the swamp.”

“In the swamp ! but how came you to
get such a mauling ?”

"I have been bitten by a rattlesnake."

"What! bitten by a rattlesnake? Do you speak seriously?"

"Quite true it is—but I have taken the antidote. I am cured."

"Antidote! Cured! And what cure? who gave you an antidote?"

"A friend whom I met in the swamp!"

"A friend in the swamp!" exclaimed Reigart, his astonishment increasing.

I had almost forgotten the necessity of keeping my secret. I saw that I had spoken imprudently. Inquisitive eyes were peeping in at the door. Ears were listening to catch every sound.

Although the inhabitant of the Mississippi is by no means of a curious disposition—*malgré* the statements of gossiping tourists—the unexplained and forlorn appearance I presented on my return was enough to excite a degree of interest even among the most apathetic people; and a number of

the guests 'of the hotel had gathered in the lobby around the door of my chamber, and were eagerly asking each other what had happened to me. I could overhear their conversation, though they did not know it.

"He's been fightin' a painter?" said one, interrogatively.

"A painter or a bar," answered another.

"'Twur some desprit varmint anyhow—it hez left its mark on him,—that it hez."

"It's the same fellow that laid out Bully Bill: ain't it!"

"The same," replied some one.

"English, ain't he?"

"Don't know. He's a Britisher, I believe. English, Irish, or Scotch, he's a hull team an' a cross dog under the wagon. By G——! he laid out Bully Bill straight as a fence-rail, wi' nothin' but a bit o' a whup, and then tuk Bill's pistols away from him! Ha! ha! ha!"

"Jehosophat!"

"He's jest a feller to whip his weight in wild cats. He's killed the catamount, I reckon."

"No doubt he's done that."

I had supposed that my encounter with Bully Bill had made me enemies among his class. It was evident from the tone and tenor of their conversation that such was not the case. Though, perhaps, a little piqued that a stranger—a mere youth as I then was—should have conquered one of their bullies, these backwoodsmen are not intensely clannish, and Bully Bill was no favourite. Had I "whipped" him on any other grounds, I should have gained a positive popularity by the act. But in defence of a slave—and I a foreigner—a Britisher, too—that was a presumption not to be pardoned. That was the drawback on my victory, and henceforth I was likely to be a "marked man" in the neighbourhood.

These observations had served to amuse

me while I was awaiting the arrival of Reigart, though, up to a certain point, I took but little interest in them. A remark that now reached my ears, however, suddenly changed the nature of my thoughts. It was this:—

“*He’s after Miss Besançon, they say.*”

I was now interested. I stepped to the door, and, placing my ear close to the key-hole, listened.

“I guess he’s arter *the plantation*,” said another; and the remark was followed by a significant laugh.

“Well, then,” rejoined a voice, in a more solemn and emphatic tone; “he’s after what he won’t get.”

“How? how?” demanded several.

“He may get *thee* lady, *preehaps*,” continued the same voice, in the same measured tones; “but not *thee* plantation.”

“How? What do you mean, Mr. Moxley?” again demanded the chorus of voices.

“I mean what I say, gentlemen,” replied

the solemn speaker ; and then repeated again his former words in a like measured drawl. "He may get *thee* lady, *pree*haps, but not *thee* plantation."

"Oh! the report's true, then?" said another voice, interrogatively. "Insolvent? Eh? Old Gayarre——"

"Owns *thee* plantation."

"And niggers?"

"Every skin o' them; the sheriff will take possession to-morrow."

A murmur of astonishment reached my ears. It was mingled with expressions of disapprobation or sympathy.

"Poor girl! it's a pity o' *her*!"

"Well, it's no wonder. She made the money fly since the old 'un died."

"Some say he didn't leave so much after all. 'Twar most part mortgaged before——"

The entrance of the doctor interrupted this conversation, and relieved me for the moment from the torture which it was inflicting upon me.

* * * * *

“A friend in the swamp, did you say?” again interrogated Reigart.

I had hesitated to reply, thinking of the crowd by the door. I said to the doctor in a low earnest voice,—

“My dear friend, I have met with an adventure; am badly scratched, as you see. Dress my wounds, but do not press me for details. I have my reasons for being silent. You will one day learn all, but not now. Therefore——”

“Enough, enough!” said the doctor, interrupting me; “do not be uneasy. Let me look at your scratches.”

The good doctor became silent, and proceeded to the dressing of my wounds.

Under other circumstances the manipulation of my wounds, for they now felt painful, might have caused me annoyance. It did not then. What I had just heard had produced a feeling within that neutralised the external pain, and I felt it not.

I was really in mental agony.

I burned with impatience to question Reigart about the affairs of the plantation,—about Eugénie and Aurore. I could not,—we were not alone. The landlord of the hotel and a negro attendant had entered the room, and were assisting the doctor in his operations. I could not trust myself to speak on such a subject in their presence. I was forced to nurse my impatience until all was over, and both landlord and servant had left us.

“Now, doctor, this news of Mademoiselle Besançon?”

“Do *you* not know all?”

“Only what I have heard this moment from these gossips outside the room.”

I detailed to Reigart the remarks that had been made.

“Really I thought you must have been acquainted with the whole matter. I had fancied that to be the cause of your long

absence to-day; though I did not even conjecture how you might be engaged in the matter."

"I know nothing more than what I have thus accidentally overheard. For heaven's sake tell me all! Is it true?"

"Substantially true, I grieve to say."

"Poor Eugénie!"

"The estate was heavily mortgaged to Gayarre. I have long suspected this, and fear there has been some foul play. Gayarre has foreclosed the mortgage, and, indeed, it is said, is already in possession. Everything is now his."

"Everything?"

"Everything upon the plantation."

"The slaves?"

"Certainly."

"All—all—and—and—Aurore?"

I hesitated as I put the interrogatory. Reigart had no knowledge of my attachment to Aurore.

“The quadroon girl, you mean?—of course, she with the others. She is but a slave like the rest. She will be sold.”

“But a slave! sold with the rest!”

This reflection was not uttered aloud.

I cannot describe the tumult of my feelings as I listened. The blood was boiling within my veins, and I could scarce restrain myself from some wild expression. I strove to the utmost to hide my thoughts, but scarce succeeded; for I noticed that the usually cold eye of Reigart was kindled in surprise at my manner. If he divined my secret he was generous, for he asked no explanation.

“The slaves are all to be sold then?”
I faltered out.

“No doubt,—everything will be sold,—that is the law in such cases. It is likely Gayarre will buy in the whole estate, as the plantation lies contiguous to his own.”

“Gayarre! villain! oh! And Made-moiselle Besançon, what will become of her? Has she no friends?”

"I have heard something of an aunt who has some, though not much, property. She lives in the city. It is likely that Mademoiselle will live with her in future. I believe the aunt has no children of her own, and Eugénie will inherit. This, however, I cannot vouch for. I know it only as a rumour."

Reigart spoke these words in a cautious and reserved manner. I noticed something peculiar in the tone in which he uttered them; but I knew his reason for being cautious. He was under a mistaken impression as to the feelings with which *I* regarded Eugénie. I did not undeceive him.

"Poor Eugénie! a double sorrow,—no wonder at the change I had observed of late,—no wonder she appeared sad!"

All this was but my own silent reflections.

"Doctor!" said I, elevating my voice; "I must go to the plantation."

"Not to-night."

"To-night,—now!"

"My dear Mr. R., you must not."

"Why?"

"It is impossible,—I cannot permit it,—you will have fever; it may cost you your life!"

"But——"

"I cannot hear you. I assure you, you are now on the verge of a fever. You must remain in your room—at least, until tomorrow. Perhaps then you may go out with safety. Now it is impossible."

I was compelled to acquiesce, though I am not certain but that had I taken my own way it would have been better for my "fever." Within me was a *cause of fever* much stronger than any exposure to the night air. My throbbing heart and wildly-coursing blood soon acted upon my brain.

"Aurore the slave of Gayarre! Ha! ha! ha! His slave! Gayarre! Aurore! ha! ha! ha! Is it his throat I clutch? ha, no! It is the serpent! here—help—help! Water! water! I am choking. No, Gay-

arre is! I have him now! Again it is the serpent! O God! it coils around my throat—it strangles me! Help! Aurore! lovely Aurore! do not yield to him!”

“I will die rather than yield!”

“I thought so, noble girl! I come to release you! How she struggles in his grasp! Fiend! off—off, fiend! Aurore, you are free—free! Angels of heaven!”

* * * * *

Such was my dream,—the dream of a fevered brain.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LETTER.

DURING all the night my sleep was broken at intervals, and the hours divided between dreaming and half delirium.

I awoke in the morning not much refreshed with my night's rest. I lay for some time passing over in my mind the occurrences of yesterday, and considering what course I should pursue.

After a time I determined upon going direct to the plantation, and learning for myself how matters stood there.

I arose with this intention. As I was dressing, my eye fell upon a letter that lay upon the table. It bore no postmark, but the writing was in a female hand, and I guessed whence it came.

I tore open the seal, and read:—

“ *Monsieur!*

“ *To-day, by the laws of Louisiana, I am a woman,—and none more unhappy in all the land. The same sun that has risen upon the natal day of my majority looks down upon the ruin of my fortune!*

“ *It was my design to have made you happy: to have proved that I am not ungrateful. Alas! it is no longer in my power. I am no more the proprietor of the plantation Besançon,—no more the mistress of Aurore! All is gone from me, and Eugénie Besançon is now a beggar. Ah, Monsieur! it is a sad tale, and I know not what will be its end.*

“ *Alas! there are griefs harder to bear than the loss of fortune. That may in time be repaired, but the anguish of unrequited love,—love strong, and single, and pure, as mine is,—must long endure,—perchance for ever!*

“ *Know, Monsieur, that in the bitter cup it is my destiny to drink, there is*

not one drop of jealousy or reproach. I alone have made the misery that is my portion.

"Adieu, Monsieur! adieu, and farewell! It is better we should never meet again. O be happy! no plaint of mine shall ever reach your ear, to cloud the sunshine of your happiness. Henceforth the walls of Sacré Cœur shall alone witness the sorrows of the unfortunate but grateful

"EUGÉNIE."

The letter was dated the day before. I knew that that was the birthday of the writer; in common parlance, the day on which she was "of age."

"Poor Eugénie!" reflected I. "Her happiness has ended with her girlhood. Poor Eugénie!"

The tears ran fast over my cheeks as I finished reading. I swept them hastily away, and ringing the bell I ordered my horse to be saddled. I hurried through

with my toilet; the horse was soon brought to the door; and, mounting him, I rode rapidly for the plantation.

Shortly after leaving the village, I passed two men, who were also on horseback—going in the same direction as myself, but riding at a slower pace than I. They were dressed in the customary style of planters, and a casual observer might have taken them for such. There was something about them, however, that led me to think they were not planters, nor merchants, nor men whose calling relates to any of the ordinary industries of life. It was not in their dress I saw this something, but in a certain expression of countenance. This expression I cannot well describe, but I have ever noticed it in the faces and features of men who have anything to do with the execution of the laws. Even in America, where distinctive costume and badge are absent, I have been struck with this peculiarity,—so much

so that I believe I could detect a detective in the plainest clothes.

The two men in question had this expression strongly marked. I had no doubt they were in some way connected with the execution of the laws. I had no doubt they were constables or sheriff's officers. With such a slight glance, as I gave to them in passing, I might not have troubled myself with this conjecture, had it not been for other circumstances then in my thoughts.

I had not saluted these men; but as I passed, I could perceive that my presence was not without interest to them. On glancing back, I saw that one of them had ridden close up to the other, that they were conversing earnestly; and from their gestures I could tell that I was the subject of their talk.

I had soon ridden far ahead, and ceased to think any more about them.

I had hurried forward without any pre-conceived plan of action. I had acted alto-

gether on the impulse of the moment, and thought only of reaching the house, and ascertaining the state of affairs, either from Eugénie or Aurore herself.

Thus *impromptu* I had reached the borders of the plantation.

It now occurred to me to ride more slowly in order to gain a few moments to manage my thoughts. I even halted a while. There was a slight bend in the river-bank, and the road crossed this like a chord to its arc. The part cut off was a piece of waste—a common—and as there was no fence I forsook the road, and walked my horse out on the river-bank. There I drew up, but remained seated in my saddle.

I endeavoured to sketch out some plan of action. What should I say to Eugénie? what to Aurore? Would the former see me after what she had written? In her note she had said “farewell,” but it was not a time to stand upon punctilious ceremony. And if not, should I find an op-

portunity to speak with Aurore? I *must* see her. Who should prevent me? I had much to say to her; my heart was full. Nothing but an interview with my betrothed could relieve it.

Still without any definite plan, I once more turned my horse's head down the river, used the spur, and galloped onward.

On arriving near the gate I was somewhat surprised to see two saddled horses standing there. I instantly recognised them as the horses I had passed on the road. They had overtaken me again while I was halted by the bend of the river, and had arrived at the gate before me. The saddles were now empty. The riders had gone into the house.

A black man was holding the horses. It was my old friend "Zip."

I rode up, and without dismounting addressed myself to Scipio. Who were they who had gone in?

I was hardly surprised at the answer. My conjecture was right. They were men of the law,—the deputy sheriff of the *parish* and his assistant.

It was scarce necessary to inquire their *business*. I guessed that.

I only asked Scipio the details.

Briefly Scipio gave them; at least so far as I allowed him to proceed without interruption. A sheriff's officer was in charge of the house and all its contents; Larkin still ruled the negro quarter, but the slaves were all to be sold; Gayarre was back and forward; and "*Missa 'Génie am gone away.*"

"Gone away! and whither?"

"Don't know, mass'r. B'lieve she gone to de city. She leab last night in de night time."

"And——"

I hesitated a moment till my heart should still its heavy throbbings.

“Aurore?” I interrogated with an effort.

“’Rore gone too, mass’r;—she go long wi’ Missa ’Génie.”

“Aurore gone!”

“Yes, mass’r, she gone; daat’s de troof.”

I was astounded by the information, as well as puzzled by this mysterious departure. Eugénie gone and in the night! Aurore gone with her! What could it mean? Whither had they gone?

My reiterated appeal to the black threw no light upon the subject. He was ignorant of all their movements,—ignorant of everything but what related to the negro quarter. He had heard that himself, his wife, his daughter,—“the leetle Chloe,”—with all their fellow-slaves, were to be carried down to the city, and to be sold in the slave-market by auction. They were to be taken the following day. They were already advertised. That was all he knew. No, not all,—one other piece of informa-

tion he had in store for me. It was authentic: he had heard the "white folks" talk of it to one another:—Larkin, Gayarre, and a "negro-trader," who was to be concerned in this sale. It regarded the quadroon. *She was to be sold among the rest!*

The blood boiled in my veins as the black imparted this information. It was authentic. Scipio's statement of what he had heard, minutely detailed, bore the internal evidence of authenticity. I could not doubt the report. I felt the conviction that it was true.

The plantation Besançon had no more attractions. I had no longer any business at Bringiers. New Orleans was now the scene of action for me!

With a kind word to Scipio, I wheeled my horse and galloped away from the gate. The fiery animal caught my excitement, and sprang wildly along the road. It required

all his buoyant spirit to keep pace with the quick dancing of my nerves.

In a few minutes I had consigned him to his groom ; and climbing to my chamber, commenced preparing for my departure.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WHARF-BOAT.

I now only waited a boat to convey me to New Orleans. I knew that I should not have long to wait. The annual epidemic was on the decline, and the season of business and pleasure in the "Crescent City" was about commencing. Already the up-river steamers were afloat on all the tributary streams of the mighty Mississippi, laden with the produce of its almost limitless valley, and converging towards the great Southern entrepôt of American commerce. I might expect a "down-boat" every day, or rather indeed every hour.

I resolved to take the first boat that came along.

The hotel in which I dwelt, as well as the whole village, stood at a considerable distance from the boat "landing." It had been built so from precaution. The banks of the Mississippi at this place, and for a thousand miles above and below, are elevated but a few feet above the surface level of its water; and, in consequence of the continuous detrition, it is no uncommon occurrence for large slips to give way, and be swept off in the red whirling current. It might be supposed that in time this never-ceasing action of the water would widen the stream to unnatural dimensions. But, no. For every encroachment on one bank there is a corresponding formation against the opposite,—a deposit caused by the eddy which the new curve has produced, so that the river thus preserves its original breadth. This remarkable action may be noted from the *embouchure* of the Ohio to the mouth of the Mississippi itself, though at certain points

the extent of the encroachment and the formation that neutralises it is much greater than at others. In some places the "wearing away" of the bank operates so rapidly that in a few days the whole site of a village, or even a plantation, may disappear. Not unfrequently, too, during the high spring-floods this eccentric stream takes a "near cut" across the neck of one of its own "bends," and in a few hours a channel is formed, through which pours the whole current of the river. Perhaps a plantation may have been established in the concavity of this bend,—perhaps three or four of them,—and the planter who has gone to sleep under the full belief that he had built his house upon a *continent*, awakes in the morning to find himself the inhabitant of an island! With dismay he beholds the vast volume of red-brown water rolling past, and cutting off his communication with the mainland. He can no longer ride to his neighbouring village without the aid of an ex-

pensive ferry. His wagons will no longer serve him to "haul" to market his huge cotton bales or hogsheads of sugar and tobacco; and, prompted by a feeling of insecurity—lest the next wild sweep of the current may carry himself, his house, and his several hundred half-naked negroes, along with it—he flees from his home, and retires to some other part of the stream, where he may deem the land in less danger of such unwelcome intrusion.

In consequence of these eccentricities a safe site for a town is extremely rare upon the Lower Mississippi. There are but few points in the last five hundred miles of its course where natural elevations offer this advantage. The artificial embankment, known as the "Levee," has in some measure remedied the deficiency, and rendered the towns and plantations *comparatively* secure.

As already stated, my hotel was somewhat out of the way. A boat might touch

at the landing and be off again without my being warned of it. A down-river boat, already laden, and not caring to obtain further freight, would not stop long; and in a "tavern" upon the Mississippi you must not confide in the punctuality of "Boots," as you would in a London hotel. Your chances of being waked by Sambo, ten times sleepier than yourself, are scarcely one in a hundred.

I had ample experience of this; and, fearing that the boat might pass if I remained at the hotel, I came to the resolve to settle my affairs in that quarter, and at once transport myself and my *impedimenta* to the landing.

I should not be entirely without shelter. There was no house; but an old steamboat, long since condemned as not "river-worthy," lay at the landing. This hulk, moored by strong cables to the bank, formed an excellent floating wharf; while its spacious deck, cabins, and saloons, served as a store-house for all sorts of merchandise. It was,

in fact, used both as a landing and warehouse, and was known as the "wharf-boat."

It was late,—nearly midnight,—as I stepped aboard the wharf-boat. Stragglers from the town, who may have had business there, had all gone away, and the owner of the store-boat was himself absent. A drowsy negro, his *locum tenens*, was the only human thing that offered itself to my eyes. The lower deck of the boat was tenanted by this individual, who sat behind a counter that enclosed one corner of the apartment. Upon this counter stood a pair of scales, with weights, a large ball of coarse twine, a rude knife, and such other implements as may be seen in a country "store;" and upon shelves at the back were ranged bottles of coloured liquors, glasses, boxes of hard biscuit, "Western reserve" cheeses, kegs of rancid butter, plugs of tobacco, and bundles of inferior cigars,—in short, all the etceteras of a regular "grocery." The remaining portion of the ample room was littered with

merchandise, packed in various forms. There were boxes, barrels, bags, and bales; some on their way up-stream, that had come by New Orleans from distant lands, while others were destined downward: the rich product of the soil to be borne thousands of miles over the wide Atlantic. With these various packages every part of the floor was occupied, and I looked in vain for a spot on which to stretch myself. A better light might have enabled me to discover such a place; but the tallow candle, guttering down the sides of an empty champagne bottle, but dimly lit up the confusion. It just sufficed to guide me to the only occupant of the place, upon whose sombre face the light faintly flickered.

“Asleep, uncle?” I said, approaching him.

A gruff reply from an American negro is indeed a rarity, and never given to a question politely put. The familiar style of my address touched a sympathetic chord

in the bosom of the "darkie," and a smile of satisfaction gleamed upon his features as he made answer. Of course he was *not* asleep. But my idle question was only meant as the prelude to further discourse.

"Ah, Gollys! it be massa Edwad. Uncle Sam know dyou, massa Edwad. You good to brack folk. Wat can do uncle Sam for massa?"

"I am going down to the city, and have come here to wait for a boat. Is it likely one will pass to-night?"

"Sure, massa—sure be a boat dis night. Bossy 'spect a boat from de Red ribber dis berry night—either de Houma or de Choctuma."

"Good! and now, uncle Sam, if you will find me six feet of level plank, and promise to rouse me when the boat comes in sight, I shall not grudge you this half dollar."

The sudden enlargement of the whites of uncle Sam's eyes showed the satisfaction

he experienced at the sight of the shining piece of metal. Without more ado he seized the champagne-bottle that held the candle ; and, gliding among the boxes and bales, conducted me to a stairway that led to the second or cabin-deck of the boat. We climbed up, and entered the saloon.

“ Dar, massa, plenty ob room—uncle Sam he sorry dar’s ne’er a bed, but if massa could sleep on these yeer coffee-bags, he berry welcome—berry welcome. I leave dis light wi’ massa. I can get anoder for self b’low. Good night, massa Edwad—don’t fear I wake you—no fear ob dat.”

And so saying, the kind-hearted black set the bottle-candlestick upon the floor ; and, passing down the stair again, left me to my reflections.

With such poor light as the candle afforded, I took a careless survey of my apartment. There was plenty of room, as uncle Sam had said. It was the cabin of the old steamboat ; and as the partition-doors had

been broken off and carried away, the ladies' cabin, main saloon, and front, were now all in one. Together they formed a hall of more than a hundred feet in length, and from where I stood, near the centre, both ends were lost to my view in the darkness. The state-rooms on each side were still there, with their green venetian doors. Some of these were shut, while others stood ajar, or quite open. The gilding and ornaments, dim from age and use, adorned the sides and ceiling of the hall; and over the arched entrance of the main saloon the word "Sultana," in gold letters that still glittered brightly, informed me that I was now inside the "carcase" of one of the most famous boats that ever cleft the waters of the Mississippi.

Strange thoughts came into my mind as I stood regarding this desolate saloon. Silent and solitary it seemed—even more so I thought than would some lonely spot in the midst of a forest. The very absence

of those sounds that one is accustomed to hear in such a place—the grinding of the machinery—the hoarse detonations of the 'scape-pipe—the voices of men—the busy hum of conversation, or the ringing laugh—the absence of the sights, too—the brilliant chandeliers—the long tables sparkling with crystal—the absence of these, and yet the presence of the scene associated with such sights and sounds—gave to the place an air of indescribable desolation. I felt as one within the ruins of some old convent, or amidst the tombs of an antique cemetery.

No furniture of any kind relieved the monotony of the place. The only visible objects were the coarse gunny bags strewed over the floor, and upon which uncle Sam had made me welcome to repose myself.

After surveying my odd chamber, and giving way to some singular reflections, I began to think of disposing of myself for sleep. I was wearied. My health was not

yet restored. The clean bast of the coffee-bags looked inviting. I dragged half-a-dozen of them together, placed them side by side, and then, throwing myself upon my back, drew my cloak over me. The coffee-berries yielded to the weight of my body, giving me a comfortable position, and in less than five minutes I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE NORWAY RAT.

I MUST have slept an hour or more. I did not think of consulting my watch before going to sleep, and I had little thought about such a thing after I awoke. But that I had slept at least an hour, I could tell by the length of my candle.

A fearful hour that was, as any I can remember to have spent—an hour of horrid dreaming. But I am wrong to call it so. It was no dream, though at the time I thought it one.

Listen!

As I have said, I lay down upon my back, covering myself with my ample cloak from the chin to the ankles. My face and

feet were alone free. I had placed one of the bags for a pillow, and thus raised my head in such a position, that I had a full view of the rest of my person. The light, set just a little way beyond my heels, was right before my eyes; and I could see the floor in that direction to the distance of several yards. I have said that in five minutes I was asleep. I thought that I was asleep, and to this hour I think so, and yet my eyes were open, and I plainly saw the candle before them, and that portion of the floor illumined by its rays. I thought that I endeavoured to close my eyes, but could not; nor could I change my position, but lay regarding the light and the surface of the floor around it. Presently a strange sight was presented to me. A number of small shining objects began to dance and scintillate in the darkness beyond. At first I took them for "lightning-bugs," but although these were plenty enough without, it was not usual to find

them inside an enclosed apartment. Moreover, those I saw were low down upon the floor of the saloon, and not suspended in the air, as they should have been.

Gradually the number of these shining objects increased. There were now some dozens of them, and, what was singular, they seemed to move in pairs. They were *not* fire-flies !

I began to experience a sensation of alarm. I began to feel that there was danger in these fiery spots, that sparkled in such numbers along the floor. What on earth could they be ?

I had scarce asked myself the question, when I was enabled to answer it to the satisfaction of my senses, but not to the tranquillising of my fears. The horrid truth now flashed upon me—each pair of sparkling points was a *pair of eyes* !

It was no relief to me to know they were the eyes of *rats*. You may smile at my fears, but I tell you in all seriousness

that I would not have been more frightened had I awaked and found a panther crouching to spring upon me. I had heard such tales of these Norway rats—had, in fact, been witness to their bold and ferocious feats in New Orleans, where at that time they swarmed in countless numbers—that the sight of them filled me with disgust and horror. But what was most horrible of all—I saw that they were approaching me—that they were each moment coming nearer and nearer, and that *I was unable to get out of their way!*

Yes. I could not move. My arms and limbs felt like solid blocks of stone, and my muscular power was quite gone! I *now* thought that I was *dreaming!*

“Yes!” reflected I, for I still possessed the power of reflection. “Yes—I am only dreaming! A horrid dream though—horrid—would I could wake myself—’tis nightmare! I know it—if I could but move something—my toes—my fingers—oh!”

These reflections actually passed through my mind. They have done so at other times when I have been under the influence of nightmare; and I now no longer dread this incubus, since I have learnt how to throw it off. *Then* I could not. I lay like one dead, whose eyelids have been left unclosed; and I thought I was dreaming.

Dreaming or awake, my soul had not yet reached its climax of horror. As I continued to gaze, I perceived that the number of the hideous animals increased every moment. I could now see their brown hairy bodies—for they had approached close to the candle, and were full under its light. They were *thick upon the floor*. It appeared to be alive with them, and in motion like water under a gale. Hideous sight to behold!

Still nearer they came. I could distinguish their sharp teeth—the long grey bristles upon their snouts—the spiteful expression in their small penetrating eyes.

Nearer still ! They climb upon the coffee-bags—they crawl along my legs and body—they chase each other over the folds of my cloak—they are gnawing at my boots!—Horror ! horror ! they will devour me !

They are around me in myriads. I cannot see on either side, but I know that they are all around. I can hear their shrill screaming, the air is loaded with the odour of their filthy bodies. I feel as though it will suffocate me. Horror ! horror ! oh ! merciful God ! arouse me from this terrible dream !

Such were my thoughts—such my feelings at that moment. I had a perfect consciousness of all that was passing—so perfect that I believed it a dream.

I made every effort to awake myself—to move hand and limb. It was all in vain. I could not move a muscle. Every nerve of my body was asleep. My blood lay stagnant within my veins !

I lay suffering this monstrous pain for a

long, long while. I lay in fear of being eaten up piecemeal!

The fierce animals had only attacked my boots and my cloak, but my terror was complete. I waited to feel them at my throat!

Was it my face and my eyes staring open that kept them off? I am certain my eyes were open all the while. Was it that that deterred them from attacking me? No doubt it was. They scrambled over all parts of my body, even up to my breast, but they seemed to avoid my head and face!

Whether they would have continued under the restraint of this salutary fear, I know not, for a sudden termination was put to the horrid scene.

The candle had burnt to its end, and the remnant fell with a hissing sound through the neck of the bottle, thus extinguishing the light.

Frightened by the sudden transition from light to darkness, the hideous animals ut-

tered their terrible squeaking, and broke off in every direction. I could hear the pattering of their feet upon the planks as they scampered away.

The light seemed to have been the spell that bound me in the iron chain of the nightmare. The moment it went out, I found myself again in possession of muscular strength; and, springing to my feet, I caught up my cloak and swept it wildly around me, shouting at the top of my voice.

The cold perspiration was running from every pore in my skin, and my hair felt as if on end. I still believed I was dreaming; and it was not until the astonished negro appeared with a light, and I had evidence of the presence of my hairy visitors in the condition of my cloak and boots, that I was convinced the terrible episode was a reality.

I remained no longer in the "saloon," but, wrapping my cloak around me, betook myself to the open air.

CHAPTER XV.

THE HOUMA.

I HAD not much longer to remain on the wharf-boat. The hoarse barking of a 'scape-pipe fell upon my ear, and shortly after the fires of a steam-boat furnace appeared, glittering red upon the stream. Then was heard the crashing plunging sound of the paddle-wheels as they beat the brown water, and then the ringing of the bell, and the shouts of command passing from captain to mate, and from mate to "deck hands," and in five minutes after, the "Houma"—Red River boat,—lay side by side with the old "Sultana."

I stepped aboard, threw my luggage over the guard, and, climbing up stairs, seated myself under the awning.

Ten minutes of apparent confusion—the quick trampling of feet over the decks and staging—half-a-dozen passengers hastening ashore—others hurrying in the opposite direction—the screeching of the steam—the rattling of huge fire-logs thrust endways up the furnace—at intervals the loud words of command—a peal of laughter at some rude jest, or the murmur of voices in the sadder accents of adieu. Ten minutes of these sights and sounds, and again was heard the ringing of the large bell—the signal that the boat was about to continue her course.

I had flung myself into a chair that stood beside one of the awning-posts, and close to the guards. From my position I commanded a view of the gangway, the staging-plank, and the contiguous wharf-boat, which I had just left.

I was looking listlessly on what was passing below, taking note of nothing in particular. If I had a special thought in

my mind the subject of it was not there, and the thought itself caused me to turn my eyes away from the busy groups and bend them downward along the left bank of the river. Perhaps a sigh was the concomitant of these occasional glances ; but in the intervals between, my mind dwelt upon nothing in particular, and the forms that hurried to and fro impressed me only as shadows.

This apathy was suddenly interrupted. My eyes, by pure accident, fell upon two figures whose movements at once excited my attention. They stood upon the deck of the wharf-boat—not near the stage-plank, where the torch cast its glare over the hurrying passengers, but in a remote corner under the shadow of the awning. I could see them only in an obscure light,—in fact, could scarce make out their forms, shrouded as they were in dark cloaks—but the attitudes in which they stood, the fact of their keeping thus apart in the most obscure quarter

of the boat, the apparent earnestness with which they were conversing—all led me to conjecture that they were lovers. My heart, guided by the sweet instinct of love, at once accepted this explanation, and looked for no other.

“Yes—lovers! how happy! No—perhaps not so happy—it is a *parting*! Some youth who makes a trip down to the city—perhaps some young clerk or merchant, who goes to spend his winter there. What of that? He will return in spring, again to press those delicate fingers, again to fold that fair form in his arms, again to speak those tender words that will sound all the sweeter after the long interval of silence.

“Happy youth! happy girl! Light is the misery of a parting like yours! How easy to endure when compared with that violent separation which I have experienced! Aurore!—Aurore!—Would that you were free! Would that you were some high-

born dame! Not that I should love you the more—impossible—but then might I boldly woo, and freely win. Then I might hope—but now, alas! this horrid gulf—this social abyss that yawns between us. Well! it cannot separate souls. Our love shall bridge it—Ha!”

“Hilloa, Mister! What’s gwine wrong? Anybody fell overboard!”

I heeded not the rude interrogatory. A deeper pang absorbed my soul, forcing from me the wild exclamation that had given the speaker cause.

The two forms parted—with a mutual pressure of the hand, with a kiss they parted! The young man hastened across the staging. I did not observe his face, as he passed under the light. I had taken no notice of *him*, my eyes by some strange fascination remaining fixed upon *her*. I was curious to observe how *she* would act in this final moment of leave-taking.

The planks were drawn aboard. The signal-bell sounded. I could perceive that we were moving away.

At this moment the shrouded form of the lady glided forward into the light. She was advancing to catch a farewell glance of her lover. A few steps brought her to the edge of the wharf-boat, where the torch was glaring. Her hood-like sun-bonnet was thrown back. The light fell full upon her face, glistened along the undulating masses of black hair that shrouded her temples, and danced in her glorious eyes. Good God! they were the eyes of *Aurore*!

No wonder I uttered the wild ejaculation,—

“It is she!”

“What?—a *feem*ale! overboard, do you say? Where? Where?”

The man was evidently in earnest. My soliloquy had been loud enough to reach his ears.

He believed it to be a reply to his pre-

vious question, and my excited manner confirmed him in the belief, that a woman had actually fallen into the river !

His questions and exclamations were overheard, and repeated in the voices of others who stood near. Like wildfire an alarm ran through the boat. Passengers rushed from the cabins, along the guards, and out to the front awning, and mingled their hurried interrogatories, "Who? What? Where?" A loud voice cried out—

"Some one overboard! A woman! it's a woman!"

Knowing the cause of this ridiculous alarm, I gave no heed to it. My mind was occupied with a far different matter. The first shock of a hideous passion absorbed my whole soul, and I paid no attention to what was going on around me.

I had scarce recognised the face, when the boat rounding up-stream brought the angle of the cabin between it and me. I rushed forward, as far as the gangway. I

was too late—the wheel-house obstructed the view. I did not halt, but ran on, directing myself towards the top of the wheel-house. Passengers in their excitement were rushing along the guards. They hindered my progress, and it was some time before I could climb up the wheel-house, and stand upon its rounded roof. I did so at length, but too late. The boat had forged several hundred yards into the stream. I could see the wharf-boat with its glaring lights. I could even see human forms standing along its deck, but I could no longer distinguish that one that my eyes were in search of.

Disappointed I stepped on to the hurricane-deck, which was almost a continuation of the roof of the wheel-house. There I could be alone, and commune with my now bitter thoughts.

I was not to have that luxury just then. Shouts, the trampling of heavy boots bounding over the planks, and the pattering of lighter feet, sounded in my ears; and next

moment a stream of passengers, male and female, came pouring up the sides of the wheel-house.

"That's the gentleman — that's him!" cried a voice.

In another instant the excited throng was around me, several inquiring at once,—

"Who's overboard? Who? Where?"

Of course I saw that these interrogatories were meant for me. I saw, too, that an answer was necessary to allay their ludicrous alarm.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" I said, "there is no one overboard that I am aware of. Why do you ask *me*?"

"Hilloa, Mister!" cried the cause of all this confusion, "didn't you tell me ——?"

"I told you nothing."

"But didn't I ask you if thar wan't some one overboard?"

"You did."

"And you said in reply ——"

"I said nothing in reply."

"Darned if you didn't! you said 'Thar she is!' or, 'It was she!' or something o' that sort."

I turned towards the speaker, who I perceived was rather losing credit with his auditory.

"Mister!" said I, imitating his tone, "it is evident you have never heard of the man who grew immensely rich by minding his own business."

My remark settled the affair. It was received by a yell of laughter, that completely discomfited my meddling antagonist, who, after some little swaggering and loud talk, at length went below to the "bar" to soothe his mortified spirit with a "gin-sling."

The others dropped away one by one, and dispersed themselves through the various cabins and saloons; and I found myself once more the sole occupant of the hurricane-deck.

CHAPTER XVI.

JEALOUSY.

HAVE you ever loved in humble life? some fair young girl, whose lot was among the lowly, but whose brilliant beauty in your eyes annihilated all social inequalities? Love levels all distinctions, is an adage old as the hills. It brings down the proud heart, and teaches condescension to the haughty spirit; but its tendency is to elevate, to ennoble. It does not make a peasant of the prince, but a prince of the peasant.

Behold the object of your adoration engaged in her ordinary duties! She fetches a jar of water from the well. Barefoot she treads the well-known path. Those nude

pellucid feet are fairer in their nakedness than the most delicate *chaussure* of silk and satin. The wreaths and pearl circlets, the pins of gold and drupes of coral, the costliest *coiffures* of the dress circle,—all seem plain and poor compared with the glossy *négligé* of those bright tresses. The earthen jar sits upon her head with the grace of a golden coronet—every attitude is the *pose* of a statue, a study for a sculptor; and the coarse garment that drapes that form is in your eyes more becoming than a robe of richest velvet. You care not for that. You are not thinking of the casket, but of the pearl it conceals.

She disappears within the cottage—her humble home. Humble? In your eyes no longer humble; that little kitchen, with its wooden chairs, and scoured dresser, its deal shelf, with mugs, cups, and willow-pattern plates, its lime-washed walls and cheap prints of the red soldier and the blue sailor—that little museum of the *penates*

of the poor, is now filled with a light that renders it more brilliant than the gilded saloons of wealth and fashion. That cottage with its low roof, and woodbine trellis, has become a palace. The light of love has transformed it! A paradise you are forbidden to enter. Yes, with all your wealth and power, your fine looks and your titles of distinction, your superfine cloth and bright lacquered boots, mayhap, you dare not enter there.

And oh! how you envy those who dare! —how you envy the spruce apprentice, and the lout in the smock who cracks his whip, and whistles with as much *nonchalance* as if he was between the handles of his plough! as though the awe of that fair presence should not freeze his lips to stone! *Gauché* that he is, how you envy him his *opportunities*! how you could slaughter him for those sweet smiles that appear to be lavished upon him!

There may be no meaning in those

smiles. They may be the expressions of good-nature, of simple friendship, perhaps of a little coquetry. For all that, you cannot behold them without envy—without *suspicion*. If there be a meaning—if they be the smiles of love,—if the heart of that simple girl has made its lodgment either upon the young apprentice or him of the smock—then are you fated to the bitterest pang that human breast can know. It is not jealousy of the ordinary kind. It is far more painful. Wounded vanity adds poison to the sting. Oh ! it is hard to bear !

A pang of this nature I suffered, as I paced that high platform. Fortunately they had left me alone. The feelings that worked within me could not be concealed. My looks and wild gestures must have betrayed them. I should have been a subject for satire and laughter. But I was alone. The pilot in his glass-box did not notice me. His back was towards me, and his keen eye bent steadily upon the water,

was too busy with logs and sand-bars, and snags and sawyers, to take note of my delirium.

It *was* Aurore! Of that I had no doubt whatever. Her face was not to be mistaken for any other. There was none like it—none so lovely—alas! too fatally fair.

Who could *he* be? Some young spark of the town? Some clerk in one of the stores? a young planter? who? Maybe—and with this thought came that bitter pang—one of her own prescribed race—a young man of “colour”—a mulatto—a quadroon—a slave! Ha! to be rivalled by a slave!—worse than rivalled.—Infamous coquette! Why had I yielded to her fascinations? Why had I mistaken her craft for *naïveté*?—her falsehood for truth?

* * * * *

Who could *he* be? I should search the boat till I found him. Unfortunately I had taken no marks, either of his face or his dress. My eyes had remained fixed

upon her after their parting. In the shadow I had seen him only indistinctly; and as he passed under the lights I saw him not. How preposterous then to think of looking for him! I could not recognise him in such a crowd.

I went below, and wandered through the cabins, under the front awning, and along the guard-ways. I scanned every face with an eagerness that to some must have appeared impertinence. Wherever one was young and handsome, he was an object of my scrutiny and jealousy. There were several such among the male passengers; and I endeavoured to distinguish those who had come abroad at Bringiers. There were some young men who appeared as if they had lately shipped themselves, but I had no clue to guide me, and I failed to find my rival.

In the chagrin of disappointment I returned once more to the roof; but I had hardly reached it, when a new thought

came into my mind. I remembered that the slaves of the plantation were to be sent down to the city by the first boat. Were they not travelling by that very one? I had seen a crowd of blacks—men, women, and children—hastily driven aboard. I had paid but little heed to such a common spectacle—one that may be witnessed daily, hourly. I had not thought of it, that these might be the slaves of the plantation Besançon!

If they were, then indeed there might still be hope; Aurore had not gone with them—but what of that? Though, like them, only a slave, it was not probable she would have been forced to herd with them upon the deck. But she had not come aboard! The staging had been already taken in, as I recognised her on the wharf-boat. On the supposition that the slaves of Besançon were aboard, my heart felt relieved. I was filled with a hope that all might yet be well.

Why, you may ask. I answer—simply because the thought occurred to me, that the youth, who so tenderly parted from *Aurore*, *might be a brother, or some near relative*. I had not heard of such relationship. It might be so, however; and my heart reacting from its hour of keen anguish, was eager to relieve itself by any hypothesis.

I could not endure doubt longer; and turning on my heel, I hastened below. Down the kleeps of the wheel-house, along the guardway, then down the main stairs to the boiler deck. Threading my way among bags of maize and hogsheads of sugar, now stooping under the great axle, now climbing over huge cotton bales, I reached the after part of the lower deck, usually appropriated to the “deck passengers”—the poor immigrants of Ireland and Germany, who here huddle miscellaneously with the swarthy bondsmen of the South.

As I had hoped, there were they,—those black but friendly faces,—every one of them. Old Zip, and Aunt Chloe, and the little Chloe; Hannibal, the new coachman, and Cæsar, and Pompey, and all,—all on their way to the dreaded mart.

I had halted a second or two before approaching them. The light was in my favour, and I saw them before discovering my presence. There were no signs of mirth in that sable group. I heard no laughter, no light revelry, as was their wont to indulge in in days gone by, among their little cabins in the quarter. A deep melancholy had taken possession of the features of all. Gloom was in every glance. Even the children, usually reckless of the unknown future, seemed impressed with the same sentiment. They rolled not about, tumbling over each other. They played not at all. They sat without stirring, and silent. Even they, poor infant helots, knew enough to

fear for their dark future,—to shudder at the prospect of the slave-market.

All were downcast. No wonder. They had been used to kind treatment. They might pass to a hard taskmaster. Not one of them knew where in another day should be his home—what sort of tyrant should be his lord. But that was not all. Still worse. Friends, they were going to be parted; relatives, they would be torn asunder,—perhaps never to meet more. Husband looked upon wife, brother upon sister, father upon child, mother upon infant, with dread in the heart and agony in the eye.

It was painful to gaze upon this sorrowing group, to contemplate the suffering, the mental anguish that spoke plainly in every face; to think of the wrongs which one man can legally put upon another,—the deep sinful wrongs, the outrage of every human principle. Oh, it was terribly painful to look on that picture!

It was some relief to me to know that

my presence threw at least a momentary light over its shade. Smiles chased away the sombre shadows as I appeared, and joyous exclamations hailed me. Had I been their saviour, I could not have met a more eager welcome.

Amidst their fervid ejaculations I could distinguish earnest appeals that I would buy them,—that I would become their master,—mingled with zealous protestations of service and devotion. Alas! they knew not how heavily at that moment the price of one of their number lay upon my heart.

I strove to be gay, to cheer them with words of consolation. I rather needed to be myself consoled.

During this while my eyes were busy. I scanned the faces of all. There was light enough glimmering from two oil lamps to enable me to do so. Several were young mulattoes. Upon these my glance rested, one after the other. How my heart throbbed

in this examination ! It triumphed at length. Surely there was no face there that *she* could love ? Were they all present ? Yes, all,—so Scipio said ;—all but Aurore.

“ And Aurore ? ” I asked ; “ have you heard any more of her ? ”

“ No, mass’r ; ’blieve ’Rore gone to de city. She go by de road in a carriage,—not by de boat, some ob de folks say daat, I b’lieve.”

This was strange enough. Taking the black aside,—

“ Tell me, Scipio,” I asked, “ has Aurore any relative among you ?—any brother, or sister, or cousin ? ”

“ No, mass’r, ne’er a one. Golly ! mass’r, ’Rore she near white as missa ’Genie, all de rest be black, or leas’wise yellor ; ’Rore she quaderoom, yellor folks all mulatto,—no kin to ’Rore,—no.”

I was perplexed and puzzled. My former doubts came crowding back upon me. My jealousy returned.

Scipio could not clear up the mystery. His answers to other questions which I put to him gave me no solution to it; and I returned up stairs with a heart that suffered under the pressure of disappointment.

The only reflection from which I drew comfort was, that I might have been mistaken. Perhaps, after all, it was *not* Aurore!

CHAPTER XVII.

A SCIENTIFIC JULEP.

To drown care and sorrow men drink. The spirit of wine freely quaffed will master either bodily pain or mental suffering—for a time. There is no form of the one or phase of the other so difficult to subdue as the pang of jealousy. Wine must be deeply quaffed, before that corroding poison can be washed free from the heart.

But there *is* a partial relief in the wine-cup, and I sought it. I knew it to be only temporary, and that the sorrow would soon return. But even so—even a short respite was to be desired. I could bear my thoughts no longer.

I am not brave in bearing pain. I have

more than once intoxicated myself to deaden the pitiful pain of a toothache. By the same means I resolved to relieve the dire aching of my heart.

The spirit of wine was nigh at hand, and might be imbibed in many forms.

In one corner of the "smoking-saloon" was the "bar," with its elegant adornments—its rows of decanters and bottles, with silver stoppers and labels—its glasses, and lemons, and sugar-crushers—its bouquet of aromatic mint and fragrant pines—its bunches of straw tubes for "sucking" the "mint-julep," the "sherry-cobbler," or the "claret sangaree."

In the midst of this *entourage* stood the "barkeeper;" and in this individual do not picture to yourself some seedy personage of the waiter class, with bloodless cheeks and clammy skin, such as those monstrosities of an English hotel who give you a very *degoût* for your dinner. On the contrary, behold an *élégant* of latest fa-

shion,—that is, the fashion of his country and class, the men of the river. He wears neither coat nor vest while in the exercise of his office, but his shirt will merit an observation. It is of the finest fabric of the Irish loom,—too fine to be worn by those who have woven it—and no Bond-Street furnishing house could equal its “make up.”

Gold buttons glance at the sleeves, and diamonds sparkle amid the profuse ruffles on the bosom. The collar is turned down over a black silk riband, knotted *à la Byron*; but a tropic sun has more to do with this fashion than any desire to imitate the sailor-poet. Over this shirt stretch silk braces elaborately needle-worked, and still further adorned by buckles of pure gold. A hat of the costly grass from the shores of the South Sea crowns his well-oiled locks, and thus you have the “barkeeper of the boat.” His nether man need not be described. That is the unseen portion of his person, which is below the level of the

bar. No cringing, smirking, obsequious counter-jumper he, but a dashing sprig, who, perhaps, *owns* his bar and all its contents, and who holds his head as high as either the clerk or captain.

As I approached this gentleman, he placed a glass upon the counter, and threw into it some broken fragments of ice. All this was done without a word having passed between us.

I had no need to give an order. He saw in my eye the determination to drink.

“Cobbler?”

“No,” said I; “a mint-julep.”

“Very well, I’ll mix you a julep that’ll set your teeth for you.”

“Thank you. Just what I want.”

The gentleman now placed side by side two glasses — tumblers of large size. Into one he put, first, a spoonful of crushed white sugar—then a slice of lemon—ditto of orange—next a few sprigs of green mint—after that a handful of broken ice, a gill

of water, and, lastly, a large glass measure of cognac. This done, he lifted the glasses one in each hand, and poured the contents from one to the other, so rapidly that ice, brandy, lemons, and all, seemed to be constantly suspended in the air, and oscillating between the glasses. The tumblers themselves at no time approached nearer than two feet from each other! This adroitness, peculiar to his craft, and only obtained after long practice, was evidently a source of professional pride. After some half-score of these revolutions the drink was permitted to rest in one glass, and was then set down upon the counter.

There yet remained to be given the "finishing touch." A thin slice of pineapple was cut freshly from the fruit. This held between the finger and thumb was doubled over the edge of the glass, and then passed with an adroit sweep round the circumference.

"That's the latest Orleans touch," remarked the barkeeper with a smile, as he completed the manœuvre.

There was a double purpose in this little operation. The pine-apple not only cleared the glass of the grains of sugar and broken leaves of mint, but left its fragrant juice to mingle its aroma with the beverage.

"The latest Orleans touch," he repeated; "scientific style."

I nodded my assent.

The julep was now "mixed"—which fact was made known to me by the glass being pushed a little nearer, across the marble surface of the counter.

"Have a straw?" was the laconic inquiry.

"Yes; thank you."

A joint of wheaten straw was plunged into the glass, and taking this between my lips I drew in large draughts of perhaps the most delicious of all intoxicating drinks—the mint-julep.

The aromatic liquid had scarce passed my lips when I began to feel its effects. My pulse ceased its wild throbbing. My blood became cool, and flowed in a more gentle current through my veins, and my heart seemed to be bathing in the waters of Lethe. The relief was almost instantaneous, and I only wondered I had not thought of it before. Though still far from happy, I felt that I held in my hands what would soon make me so. Transitory that happiness might be, yet the reaction was welcome at the moment, and the prospect of it pleasant to my soul. I eagerly swallowed the inspiring beverage—swallowed it in large draughts, till the straw tube, rattling among the fragments of ice at the bottom of the glass, admonished me that the fluid was all gone.

“ Another, if you please ! ”

“ You liked it, I guess ? ”

“ Most excellent ! ”

“ Said so. I reckon, stranger, we can get

up a mint-julep on board this here boat equal to either St. Charles or Verandah, if not a leetle superior to either."

"A superb drink!"

"We can mix a sherry cobbler too, that ain't hard to take."

"I have no doubt of it, but I'm not fond of sherry. I prefer this."

"You're right. So do I. The pineapple's a new idea, but an improvement, I think."

"I think so too."

"Have a fresh straw?"

"Thank you."

This young fellow was unusually civil. I fancied that his civility proceeded from my having eulogised his mint-juleps. It was not that, as I afterwards ascertained. These Western people are little accessible to cheap flattery. I owed his good opinion of me to a far different cause—the *discomfiture I had put on the meddling passenger!* I believe he had also learnt, that it was I who

had chastised the Bully Larkin ! Such "feats of arms" soon become known in the region of the Mississippi Valley, where strength and courage are qualities of high esteem. Hence, in the barkeeper's view, I was one who deserved a civil word ; and thus talking together on the best of terms, I swallowed my second julep, and called upon him for a third.

Aurore was for the moment forgotten, or when remembered, it was with less of bitterness. Now and then that parting scene came uppermost in my thoughts ; but the pang that rose with it was each moment growing feebler, and easier to be endured.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A GAME OF WHIST.

IN the centre of the smoking saloon, there was a table, and around it some half-dozen men were seated. Other half-dozen stood behind these, looking over their shoulders. The attitudes of all, and their eager glances, suggested the nature of their occupation. The flouting of pasteboard, the chink of dollars, and the oft-recurring words of "ace," "jack," and "trump," put it beyond a doubt that that occupation was gaming. "Euchre" was the game.

Curious to observe this popular American game, I stepped up and stood watching the players. My friend who had raised the false alarm was one of them ; but his

back was towards me, and I remained for some time unseen by him.

Some two or three of those who played were elegantly dressed men. Their coats were of the finest cloth, their ruffles of the costliest cambric, and jewels sparkled in their shirt bosoms and glittered upon their fingers. These fingers, however, told a tale. They told plainly as words, that they to whom they belonged had not always been accustomed to such elegant adornment. Toilet soap had failed to soften the corrugated skin, and obliterate the abrasions—the souvenirs of toil.

This was nothing. They might be gentlemen for all that. Birth is of slight consequence in the Far West. The plough-boy may become the President.

Still there was an air about these men—an air I cannot describe, but which led me at the moment to doubt their *gentility*. It was not from any swagger or assumption on their part. On the contrary, they ap-

peared the *most gentlemanly* individuals around the table!

They were certainly the most sedate and quiet. Perhaps it was this very sedateness—this polished reserve—that formed the spring of my suspicion. True gentlemen, bloods from Tennessee or Kentucky, young planters of the Mississippi coast, or French Creoles of Orleans, would have offered different characteristics. The cool complacency with which these individuals spoke and acted—no symptoms of perturbation as the trump was turned, no signs of ruffled temper when luck went against them—told two things; first, that they were men of the world, and, secondly, that they were not now playing their maiden game of “Euchre.” Beyond that I could form no judgment about them. They might be doctors, lawyers, or “gentlemen of elegant leisure”—a class by no means uncommon in the work-a-day world of America.

At that time I was still too new to Far

West society, to be able to distinguish its features. Besides, in the United States, and particularly in the western portion of the country, those peculiarities of dress and habit, which in the Old World form, as it were, the landmarks of the professions, do not exist. You may meet the preacher wearing a blue coat and bright buttons; the judge with a green one; the doctor in a white linen jacket; and the baker in glossy black broadcloth from top to toe!

Where every man assumes the right to be a gentleman, the costumes and badges of trade are studiously avoided. Even the tailor is undistinguishable in the mass of his "fellow-citizens." The land of character dresses lies farther to the southwest—Mexico is that land.

I stood for some time watching the gamblers and the game. Had I not known something of the banking peculiarities of the West, I should have believed that they were gambling for enormous

sums. At each man's right elbow lay a huge pile of bank-notes flanked by a few pieces of silver,—dollars, halves, and quarters. Accustomed as my eyes had been to bank-notes of five pounds in value, the table would have presented to me a rich appearance, had I not known that these showy parallelograms of copper-plate and banking paper, were mere “shinplasters,” representing amounts that varied from the value of one dollar to that of six and a quarter cents! Notwithstanding, the bets were far from being low. Twenty, fifty, and even a hundred dollars, frequently changed hands in a single game.

I perceived that the hero of the false alarm was one of the players. His back was towards me where I stood, and he was too much engrossed with his game to look around.

In dress and general appearance he differed altogether from the rest. He wore a white beaver hat with broad brim, and a

coat of grey "jeans," wide-sleeved and loose-bodied. He had the look of a well-to-do corn-farmer from Indiana or a pork-merchant from Cincinnati. Yet there was something in his manner that told you river-travelling was not new to him. It was not his first trip "down South." Most probably the second supposition was the correct one,—he was a dealer in hog-meat.

One of the fine gentlemen I have described sat opposite to where I was standing. He appeared to be losing considerable sums, which the farmer or pork-merchant was winning. It proved that the luck of the cards was not in favour of the smartest-looking players—an inducement to other plain people to try a hand.

I began to feel sympathy for the elegant gentleman, his losses were so severe. I could not help admiring the composure with which he bore them.

At length he looked up, and scanned the faces of those who stood around. He seemed desirous of giving up the play. His eye met mine. He said, in a careless way,—

“Perhaps, stranger, *you* wish to take a hand? You may have my place if you do. I have no luck. I could not win under any circumstances to-night. I shall give up playing.”

This appeal caused the rest of the players to turn their faces towards me, and among others the pork-dealer. I expected an ebullition of anger from this individual. I was disappointed. On the contrary, he hailed me in a friendly tone.

“Hilloa, mister!” cried he, “I hope you ain’t miffed at me?”

“Not in the least,” I replied.

“Fact, I meant no offence. Did think thar war a some ’un over-board. Dog gone me, if I didn’t!”

"Oh! I have taken no offence," rejoined I; "to prove it, I ask you now to drink with me."

The juleps and the late reaction from bitter thought had rendered me of a jovial disposition. The free apology at once won my forgiveness.

"Good as wheat!" assented the pork-dealer. "I'm your man; but, stranger, you must allow me to pay. You see, I've won a trifle here. *My* right to pay for the drinks."

"Oh! I have no objection."

"Well then, let's all licker! *I* stand drinks all round. What say you, fellars?" A murmur of assent answered the interrogatory.

"Good!" continued the speaker. "Hyar, barkeeper! drinks for the crowd!"

And so saying, he of the white hat and jeans coat stepped forward to the bar, and placed a couple of dollars upon the counter. All who were near followed him, shouting

each out the name of the beverage most to his liking in the various calls of "gin-sling," "cocktail," "cobbler," "julep," "brandy-smash," and such-like interesting mixtures.

In America men do not sit and sip their liquor, but drink standing. *Running*, one might say—for, be it hot or cold, mixed or "neat," it is gone in a gulp, and then the drinkers retire to their chairs to smoke, chew, and wait for the fresh invitation, "Let's all licker!"

In a few seconds we had all liquored, and the players once more took their seats around the table.

The gentleman, who had proposed to me to become his successor, did not return to his place. He had no luck, he again said, and would not play any more that night.

Who would accept his place and his partner? I was appealed to.

I thanked my new acquaintances, but the thing was impossible, as I had never played Euchre, and therefore knew nothing

about the game, beyond the few points I had picked up while watching them.

"That ar awkward," said the pork-dealer. "Ain't we nohow able to get up a set? Come, Mr. Chorley,—I believe that's your name, sir?" (This was addressed to the gentleman who had risen.) "You ain't a-goin' to desart us that away? We can't make up a game if you do?"

"I should only lose if I played longer," reiterated Chorley. "No," continued he, "I won't risk it."

"Perhaps this gentleman plays 'whist,'" suggested another, alluding to me. "You're an Englishman, sir, I believe. I never knew one of your countrymen who was not a good whist-player."

"True, I can play whist," I replied carelessly.

"Well, then, what say you all to a game of whist?" inquired the last speaker, glancing around the table.

"Don't know much about the game,"

bluntly answered the pork-dealer. "Mout play it on a pinch rayther than spoil sport; but whoever hez me for a partner 'll have to keep a sharp look-out for himself, I reckon."

"I guess you know the game as well as I do," replied the one who had proposed it.

"I hain't played a rubber o' whist for many a year, but if we can't make up the set at Euchre, let's try one."

"Oh! if you're going to play whist," interposed the gentleman who had seceded from the game of Euchre,—“if you're going to play whist, I don't mind taking a hand at *that*—it may change my luck—and if this gentleman has no objection, I'd like him for my partner. As you say, sir, Englishmen are good whist-players. It's their national game, I believe."

"Won't be a fair match, Mr. Chorley," said the dealer in hog-meat; "but, since you propose it, if Mr. Hatcher here — your name, sir, I believe?"

"Hatcher is my name," replied the per-

son addressed, the same who suggested whist.

"If Mr. Hatcher here," continued white-hat, "has no objection to the arrangement, I'll not back out. Dog gone, if I do!"

"Oh! I don't care," said Hatcher, in a tone of reckless indifference, "anything to get up a game."

Now, I was never fond of gambling, either amateur or otherwise, but circumstances had made me a tolerable whist-player, and I knew there were few who could beat me at it. If my partner knew the game as well, I felt certain we could not be badly damaged; and according to all accounts he understood it well. This was the opinion of one or two of the bystanders, who whispered in my ear that he was a "whole team" at whist.

Partly from the reckless mood I was in—partly that a secret purpose urged me on—a purpose which developed itself more strongly afterwards—and partly that I had

been bantered, and, as it were, "cornered" into the thing, I consented to play—Chorley and I *versus* Hatcher and the pork-merchant.

We took our seats—partners *vis-à-vis*—the cards were shuffled, cut, dealt, and the game began.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GAME INTERRUPTED.

WE played the first two or three games for low stakes—a dollar each. This was agreeable to the desire of Hatcher and the pork-merchant—who did not like to risk much as they had nearly forgotten the game. Both, however, made “hedge bets” freely against my partner, Chorley, and against any one who chose to take them up. These bets were on the turn-up, the colour, the “honours,” or the “odd trick.”

My partner and I won the two first games, and rapidly. I noted several instances of bad play on the part of our opponents. I began to believe that they really were not a match for us. Chorley said so with an

air of triumph, as though we were playing merely for the honour of the thing, and the stakes were of no consequence. After a while, as we won another game, he repeated the boast.

The pork-dealer and his partner seemed to get a little nettled.

"It's the cards," said the latter, with an air of pique.

"'F coorse it's the cards," repeated white-hat. "Had nothing but darned rubbish since the game begun. Thar again!"

"Bad cards again?" inquired his partner with a sombre countenance.

"Bad as blazes! couldn't win corn-shucks with 'em."

"Come, gentlemen!" cried my partner, Chorley; "not exactly fair that—no hints."

"Bah!" ejaculated the dealer. "Mout show you my hand, for that matter. Thar ain't a trick in it."

We won again!

Our adversaries, getting still more nettled

at our success, now proposed doubling the stakes. This was agreed to, and another game played.

Again Chorley and I were winners, and the porkman asked his partner if he would double again. The latter consented after a little hesitation, as though he thought the amount too high. Of course we, the winners, could not object, and once more we "swept the shinplasters," as Chorley euphoniouly expressed it.

The stakes were again doubled, and possibly would have increased in the same ratio again and again had I not made a positive objection. I remembered the amount of cash I carried in my pocket, and knew that at such a rate, should fortune go against us, my purse would not hold out. I consented, however, to a stake of ten dollars each, and at this amount we continued the play.

It was well we had not gone higher, for from this time fortune seemed to desert us. We lost almost every time, and at the rate

of ten dollars a game. I felt my purse grow sensibly lighter. I was in a fair way of being "cleared out."

My partner, hitherto so cool, seemed to lose patience, at intervals anathematising the cards, and wishing he had never consented to a game of "nasty whist." Whether it was this excitement that caused it I could not tell, but certainly he played badly—much worse than at the beginning. Several times he flung down his cards without thought or caution. It seemed as if his temper, ruffled at our repeated losses, rendered him careless, and even reckless, about the result. I was the more surprised at this, as but an hour before at Euchre I had seen him lose sums of double the amount apparently with the utmost indifference.

We had not bad luck neither. Each hand our cards were good; and several times I felt certain we should have won, had my partner played his hand more skilfully. As it was, we continued to lose, until I felt satisfied

that nearly half of my money was in the pockets of Hatcher and the pork-dealer.

No doubt the whole of it would soon have found its way into the same receptacles, had not our game been suddenly, and somewhat mysteriously, interrupted.

Some loud words were heard—apparently from the lower deck—followed by a double report, as of two pistols discharged in rapid succession, and the moment after a voice called out, “Great God! there’s a man shot!”

The cards fell from our fingers—each seized his share of the stakes, springing to his feet as he did so; and then players, backers, lookers-on, and all, making for front and side entrances, rushed *pell-mell* out of the saloon.

Some ran down stairs—some sprang up to the hurricane-deck—some took aft, others forward, all crying out “Who is it?” “Where is he?” “Who fired?” “Is he killed?” and a dozen like interrogatories, interrupted at

intervals by the screams of the ladies in their cabins. The alarm of the "woman overboard" was nothing to this new scene of excitement and confusion. But what was most mysterious was the fact that no killed or wounded individual could be found, nor any one who had either fired a pistol or had seen one fired! No man had been shot, nor had any man shot him!

What the deuce could it mean? Who had cried out that some one was shot? That no one could tell! Mystery, indeed. Lights were carried round into all the dark corners of the boat, but neither dead nor wounded, nor trace of blood, could be discovered; and at length men broke out in laughter, and stated their belief that the "hul thing was a hoax." So declared the dealer in hog-meat, who seemed rather gratified that he no longer stood alone as a contriver of false alarms.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SPORTSMEN OF THE MISSISSIPPI.

BEFORE things had reached this point, I had gained an explanation of the mysterious alarm. I alone knew it, along with the individual who had caused it.

On hearing the shots, I had run forward under the front awning, and stood looking over the guards. I was looking down upon the boiler-deck—for it appeared to me that the loud words that preceded the reports had issued thence, though I also thought that the shots had been fired at some point nearer.

Most of the people had gone out by the side entrances, and were standing over the

gangways, so that I was alone in the darkness, or nearly so.

I had not been many seconds in this situation, when some one glided alongside of me, and touched me on the arm. I turned and inquired who it was, and what was wanted. A voice answered me in French,—

“A friend, Monsieur, who wishes to do you a service.”

“Ha, that voice! It was you, then, who called out——”

“It was.”

“And——”

“I who fired the shots—precisely.”

“There is no one killed, then?”

“Not that I know of. My pistol was pointed to the sky—besides it was loaded blank.”

“I’m glad of that, Monsieur; but for what purpose, may I ask, have you——”

“Simply to do *you* a service, as I have said.”

"But how do you contemplate serving me by firing off pistols, and frightening the passengers of the boat out of their senses?"

"Oh! as to that, there's no harm done. They'll soon get over their little alarm. I wanted to speak with you alone. I could think of no other device to separate you from your new acquaintances. The firing of my pistol was only a *ruse* to effect that purpose. It has succeeded, you perceive."

"Ha! Monsieur, it was you then who whispered the word in my ear as I sat down to play?"

"Yes; have I not prophesied truly?"

"So far you have. It was you who stood opposite me in the corner of the saloon?"

"It was I."

Let me explain these two last interrogatories. As I was about consenting to the game of whist, some one plucked my sleeve, and whispered in French,—

“Don’t play, Monsieur ; you are certain to lose.”

I turned in the direction of the speaker, and saw a young man just leaving my side ; but was not certain whether it was he who had given this prudent counsel. As is known, I did not heed it.

Again, while engaged in the game, I noticed this same young man standing in front of me, but in a distant and somewhat dark corner of the saloon. Notwithstanding the darkness, I saw that his eyes were bent upon me, as I played. This fact would have drawn my attention of itself, but there was also an expression in the face that at once fixed my interest ; and, each time, while the cards were being dealt, I took the opportunity to turn my eyes upon this strange individual.

He was a slender youth, under the medium height, and apparently scarce twenty years of age, but a melancholy tone that pervaded his countenance made him look a little

older. His features were small, but finely chiselled—the nose and lips resembling more those of a woman. His cheek was almost colourless, and dark silky hair fell in profuse curls over his neck and shoulders; for such at that time was the Creole fashion. I felt certain the youth was a Creole, partly from his French cast of countenance, partly from the fashion and material of his dress, and partly because he spoke French—for I was under the impression it was he who had spoken to me. His costume was altogether of Creole fashion. He wore a blouse of brown linen—not after the mode of that famous garment as known in France—but as the Creole “*hunting-shirt*,” with plaited body and gracefully-gathered skirt. Its material, moreover,—the fine unbleached linen,—showed that the style was one of choice, not a mere necessary covering. His pantaloons were of the finest sky-blue *cottonade*—the produce of the looms of Opelousas. They were plaited

very full below the waist, and open at the bottoms with rows of buttons to close them around the ankles when occasion required. There was no vest. Its place was supplied by ample frills of cambric lace, that puffed out over the breast. The *chaussure* consisted of gaiter-bootees of drab lasting-cloth, tipped with patent leather, and fastened over the front with a silk lace. A broad-brimmed Panama hat completed the dress, and gave the finishing touch to this truly Southern costume.

There was nothing *outré* about either the shirt, the pantaloons, the head-dress, or foot-gear. All were in keeping—all were in a style that at that period was the *mode* upon the lower Mississippi. It was not, therefore, the dress of this youth that had arrested my attention. I had been in the habit of seeing such every day. It could not be that. No—the dress had nothing to do with the interest which he had excited. Perhaps my regarding him as the author of

the brief counsel that had been uttered in my ear had a little to do with it—but not all. Independent of that, there was something in the face itself that forcibly attracted my regard—so forcibly that I began to ponder whether I had ever seen it before. If there had been a better light, I might have resolved the doubt, but he stood in shadow, and I could not get a fair view of him.

It was just about this time that I missed him from his station in the corner of the saloon, and a minute or two later were heard the shouts and shots from without.

“And now, Monsieur, may I inquire why you wish to speak to me, and what you have to say?”

I was beginning to feel annoyed at the interference of this young fellow. A man does not relish being suddenly pulled up from a game of whist; and not a bit the more that he has been losing at it.

“Why I wish to speak to you is, because

I feel an interest in you. What I have to say you shall hear."

"An interest in me! And pray, Sir, to what am I indebted for this interest?"

"Is it not enough that you are a stranger likely to be plundered of your purse?—a *green-horn*——"

"How, Monsieur?"

"Nay, do not be angry with me. That is the phrase which I have heard applied to you to-night by more than one of your new acquaintances. If you return to play with them, I think you will merit the title."

"Come, Monsieur, this is too bad: you interfere in a matter that does not concern you."

"True, it does not; but it concerns *you*, and yet—ah!"

I was about to leave this meddling youth and hurry back to the game, when the strange melancholy tone of his voice caused

me to hesitate, and remain by him a little longer.

"Well," I said, "you have not yet told me what you wished to say."

"Indeed, I have said already. I have told you not to play—that you would lose if you did. I repeat that counsel."

"True, I have lost a little, but it does not follow that fortune will be always on one side. It is rather my partner's fault, who seems a bad player."

"Your partner, if I mistake not, is one of the best players on the river. I think I have seen that gentleman before."

"Ha! you know him then?"

"Something of him—not much, but that much I know. Do *you* know him?"

"Never saw him before to-night."

"Nor any of the others?"

"They are all equally strangers to me."

"You are not aware, then, that you are playing with *sportsmen*?"

"No; but I am very glad to hear it. I

am something of a sportsman myself—as fond of dogs, horses, and guns, as any of the three, I warrant.”

“Ha! Monsieur, you misapprehend. A sportsman in your country, and a sportsman in a Mississippi steamboat, are two very distinct things. Foxes, hares, and partridges, are the game of your sportsman. Greenhorns and their purses are the game of gentry like these.”

“The men with whom I am playing, then, are ——”

“Professional gamblers — steamboat sharpers.”

“Are you sure of this, Monsieur?”

“Quite sure of it. Oh! I often travel up and down to New Orleans. I have seen them all before.”

“But one of them has the look of a farmer or a merchant, as I thought—a pork-merchant from Cincinnati—his talk ran that way.”

“Farmer—merchant, ha! ha! ha! a farmer

without acres—a merchant without trade! Monsieur, that simply-dressed old fellow is said to be the ‘smartest’—that is the Yankee word—the smartest sportsman in the Mississippi valley, and such are not scarce, I trow.”

“After all, they are strangers to each other, and one of them is my partner—I do not see how they can ——”

“Strangers to each other!” interrupted my new friend. “Since when have they become acquainted. I myself have seen the three in company, and at the same business, almost every time I have journeyed on the river. True, they talk to each other as if they had accidentally met. That is part of their arrangement for cheating such as you.”

“So you believe they have actually been cheating me?”

“Since the stakes have been raised to ten dollars they have.”

“But how?”

“ Oh, it is very simple. Sometimes your partner designedly played the wrong card _____”

“ Ha! I see now; I believe it.”

“ It did not need that though. Even had you had an honest partner, it would have been all the same in the end. Your opponents have a system of signals by which they can communicate to each other many facts—the sort of cards they hold,—the colour of the cards, their value, and so forth. You did not observe how they placed their fingers upon the edge of the table. *I* did. One finger laid horizontally denoted one trump—two fingers placed in a similar manner, two trumps—three for three, and so on. A slight curving of the fingers told how many of the trumps were honours; a certain movement of the thumbs bespoke an ace; and in this way each of your adversaries knew almost to a card what his partner had got. It needed not the third to bring about the desired result. As it was, there were

seven knaves about the table—four in the cards, and three among the players.”

“This is infamous!”

“True, I would have admonished you of it sooner; but of course, I could not find an opportunity. It would have been no slight danger for me to have told you openly, and exposed the rascals. Hence, the *ruse* I have been compelled to adopt. These are no common swindlers. Any of the three would resent the slightest imputation upon their honour. Two of them are noted duellists. Most likely I should have been called out to-morrow and shot, and you would scarce have thanked me for my ‘interference.’”

“My dear sir, I am exceedingly grateful to you. I am convinced that what you say is true. How would you have me act?”

“Simply give up the game—let your losses go—you cannot recover them.”

“But I am not disposed to be thus outraged, and plundered with impunity. I

shall try another game, watch them, and
_____”

“No, you would be foolish to do so. I tell you, Monsieur, these men are noted duellists as well as black-legs, and possess courage. One of them, your partner, has given proof of it by having travelled over three hundred miles to fight with a gentleman who had slandered him, or rather had spoken the truth about him! He succeeded, moreover, in killing his man. I tell you, Monsieur, you can gain nothing by quarrelling with such men, except a fair chance of having a bullet through you. I know you are a stranger in our country. Be advised then, and act as I have said. Leave them to their gains. It is late. Retire to your state-room, and think no more on what you have lost.”

Whether it was the late excitement consequent upon the false alarm, or whether it was the strange development I had just listened to, aided by the cool river breeze,

I know not; but the intoxication passed away, and my brain became clear. I doubted not for a moment that the young Creole had told me the truth. His manner as well as words, connected with the circumstances that had just transpired, produced full conviction.

I felt impressed with a deep sense of gratitude to him for the service he had rendered, and at such risk to himself—for even the *ruse* he had adopted might have had an awkward ending for him, had any one seen him fire off his pistols.

Why had he acted thus? Why this interest in my affairs? Had he assigned the true reason? Was it a feeling of pure chivalry that had prompted him? I had heard of just such instances of noble nature among the Creole French of Louisiana. Was this another illustration of that character?

I say I was impressed with a deep sense of gratitude, and resolved to follow his advice.

"I shall do as you say," I replied; "on one condition."

"Name it, Monsieur."

"That you will give me your address,—so that when we arrive in New Orleans, I may have the opportunity of renewing your acquaintance, and proving to you my gratitude."

"Alas! Monsieur, I have no address."

I felt embarrassed. The melancholy tone in which these words were uttered was not to be mistaken; some grief pressed heavily on that young and generous heart.

It was not for me to inquire into its cause, least of all at that time; but my own secret sorrow enabled me to sympathise the more deeply with others, and I felt I stood beside one whose sky was far from serene. I felt embarrassed by his answer. It left me in a delicate position to make reply. I said at length,—

"Perhaps you will do me the favour to call upon me? I live at the Hotel St. Luis."

"I shall do so with pleasure."

"To-morrow?"

"To-morrow night."

"I shall stay at home for you. *Bon soir*,
Monsieur."

We parted, each taking the way to his
state-room.

In ten minutes after I lay in my shelf-
like bed asleep; and in ten hours after I
was drinking my *café* in the Hotel St. Luis.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CITY.

I AM strongly in favour of a country life.
I am a lover of the chase and the angle.

Perhaps if I were to analyse the feeling I might find that these predilections have their source in a purer fountain—the love of Nature herself. I follow the deer in his tracks, because they lead me into the wildest solitudes of the forest—I follow the trout in its stream, because I am guided into still retreats, by the margin of shady pools, where human foot rarely treads. Once in the haunts of the fish and the game my sporting energy dies within me. My rod-spear pierces the turf, my gun lies neglected by my side, and I yield up my soul to

α diviner dalliance with the beauties of Nature. Oh, I am a rare lover of the sylvan scene !

And yet, for all this, I freely admit that the first hours spent in a great city have for me a peculiar fascination. A world of new pleasures is suddenly placed within reach—a world of luxury opened up. The soul is charmed with rare joys. Beauty and song, wine and the dance, vary their allurements. Love, or it may be passion, beguiles you into many an incident of romantic adventure ; for romance may be found within the walled city. The human heart is its home, and they are but Quixotic dreamers who fancy that steam and civilisation are antagonistic to the purest aspirations of poetry. A sophism, indeed, is the chivalry of the savage. His rags, so picturesque, often cover a shivering form and a hungry stomach. Soldier though I may claim to be, I prefer the cheering roll of the busy mill to the thunder of the cannon—I regard the

tall chimney, with its banner of black smoke, a far nobler sight than the fortress turret with its flouting and fickle flag. I hear sweet music in the plashing of the paddle-wheel; and in my ears a nobler sound is the scream of the iron horse than the neigh of the pampered war-steed. A nation of monkeys may manage the business of gun-powder; they must be men to control the more powerful element of steam.

These ideas will not suit the puling sentimentalism of the boudoir and the boarding-school. The Quixotism of the modern time will be angry with the rough writer who thus rudely lays his hand upon the helm of the mailed knight, and would deflower it of its glory and glossy plumes. It is hard to yield up prejudices and preconceptions, however false; and the writer himself in doing so confesses to the cost of a struggle of no ordinary violence. It was hard to give up the Homeric illusion, and believe that Greeks were men, not demigods—hard to recognise.

in the organ-man and the opera-singer the descendants of those heroes portrayed in the poetic pictures of a Virgil; and yet in the days of my dreamy youth, when I turned my face to the West, I did so under the full conviction, that the land of prose was before me and the land of poetry behind my back!

Thanks to St. Hubert and the golden ring of the word "Mexico," I did turn my face in that direction; and no sooner had I set foot on those glorious shores, trodden by a Columbus and a Cortez, than I recognised the home both of the poetic and the picturesque. In that very land, called prosaic—the land of dollars—I inhaled the very acmé of the poetic spirit; not from the rhythm of books, but expressed in the most beautiful types of the human form, in the noblest impulses of the human soul, in rock and stream, in bird, and leaf, and flower. In that very city, which, thanks to perjured and prejudiced travellers, I had been taught

to regard as a sort of outcast camp, I found humanity in its fairest forms — progress blended with pleasure—civilisation adorned with the spirit of chivalry as with a wreath. Prosaic indeed!—a dollar-loving people! I make bold to assert, that, in the concave of that little crescent where lies the city of New Orleans will be found a psychological *mélange* of greater variety and interest than exists in any space of equal extent on the globe's surface. There the passions, favoured by the clime, reach their fullest, highest development. Love and hate, joy and grief, avarice, ambition—all attain to perfect vigour. There, too, the moral virtues are met with in full purity. Cant has there no home, hypocrisy must be deep indeed to avoid exposure and punishment. Genius is almost universal—universal, too, is activity. The stupid and the slothful cannot exist in this moving world of busy life and enjoyment.

An ethnological *mélange* as well this sin-

gular city presents. Perhaps no other city exhibits so great a variety of nationalities as in its streets. Founded by the French, held by the Spaniards, "annexed" by the Americans, these three nations form the elements of its population. But you may, nevertheless, there meet with representatives of most other civilised, and of many "savage" people. The Turk in his turban, the Arab in his burnouse, the Chinaman with shaven scalp and queue, the black son of Africa, the red Indian, the swarthy mestize, the yellow mulatto, the olive Malay, the light graceful Creole, and the not less graceful Quadroon, jostle each other in its streets, and jostle with the red-blooded races of the North, the German and Gael, the Russ and Swede, the Fleming, the Yankee, and the Englishman. An odd human mosaic — a mottled piebald mixture is the population of the Crescent City.

In truth, New Orleans is a great metropolis, more of a city than places of much greater population, either in Europe or

America. In passing through its streets you feel that you are not in a provincial town. Its shops exhibit the richest goods of best workmanship. Palace-like hotels appear in every street. Luxurious *cafés* invite you into their elegant saloons. Theatres are there—grand architectural temples—in which you may witness the drama well performed in French, and German, and English, and in its season you may listen to the soul-moving music of the Italian opera. If you are a lover of the Terpsichorean art, you will find New Orleans, *par excellence*, the town to your taste.

* * * * *

I knew the capacities of New Orleans to afford pleasure. I was acquainted with the sources of enjoyment, yet I sought them not. After a long interval of country life I entered the city without a thought of its gaieties—a rare event in the life even of the most sedate. The masquerades, the quadroon-balls, the drama, the sweet strains of

the Opera, had lost their attractions for me. No amusement could amuse me at that moment. One thought alone had possession of my heart—Aurore ! There was room for no other.

I pondered as to how I should act.

Place yourself in my position, and you will surely acknowledge it a difficult one. First, I was in love with this beautiful quadroon—in love beyond redemption. Secondly, she, the object of my passion, was *for sale*, and by *public auction* ! Thirdly, I was jealous—aye jealous, of that which might be sold and bought like a bale of cotton,—a barrel of sugar ! Fourthly, I was still uncertain whether I should have it in my power to become the purchaser. I was still uncertain whether my banker's letter had yet reached New Orleans. Ocean steamers were not known at this period, and the date of a European mail could not be relied upon with any degree of certainty. Should that

not come to hand in due time, then indeed should my misery reach its culminating point. Some one else would become possessed of all I held dear on earth—would be her lord and master—with power to do aught—oh God! the idea was fearful. I could not bear to dwell upon it.

Again, even should my letter reach me in time, would the amount I expected be enough? Five hundred pounds sterling—five times five—twenty-five hundred dollars! Would twenty-five hundred be the price of that which was priceless?

I even doubted whether it would. I knew that a thousand dollars was at that time the “average value” of a slave, and it was rare when one yielded twice that amount. It must be a strong-bodied man—a skilful mechanic, a good blacksmith, an expert barber, to be worth such a sum!

But for Aurore. Oh! I had heard strange tales of “fancy prices,” for such a

“lot”—of brisk competition in the bidding—of men with long purses and lustful thoughts eagerly contending for such a prize.

Such thoughts might harrow the soul even under the most ordinary circumstances ; what was their effect upon me ? I cannot describe the feelings I experienced.

Should the sum reach me in time—should it prove enough—should I even succeed in becoming the *owner* of Aurore, what then ? What if my jealousy were well founded ? What if she loved me not ? Worse dilemma than ever. I should only have her body—then her heart and soul would be another’s, I should live in exquisite torture—the slave of a slave !

Why should I attempt to purchase her at all ? Why not make a bold effort, and free myself from this delirious passion ? She is not worthy of the sacrifice I would make for her. No—she has deceived me—surely she has deceived me. Why not break my promise, plighted though it be in

words of fervid love? Why not flee from the spot, and endeavour to escape the torture that is maddening both my heart and brain? Oh! why not?

In calmer moments, such questions might be thought worthy of an answer. I could not answer them. I did not even entertain them,—though, like shadows, they flitted across my mind. In the then state of my feelings, prudence was unknown. Expediency had no place. I would not have listened to its cold counsels. You who have passionately loved can alone understand me. I was resolved to risk fortune, fame, life—all—to possess the object I so deeply adored.

CHAPTER XXII.

VENTE IMPORTANTE DES NÈGRES.

“ *L’ABEILLE, Monsieur ?* ”

The *garçon* who helped me to the fragrant cup, at the same time handed me a newspaper fresh from the press.

It was a large sheet, headed upon one side “*L’Abeille*,” on the reverse its synonyme in English, “*The Bee*.” Half of its contents were in French, half in English: each half was a counterpart—a translation of the other.

I mechanically took the journal from the hand of the waiter, but without either the design or inclination to read it. Mechanically my eyes wandered over its broad-sheet—scarce heeding the contents.

All at once, the heading of an advertisement fixed my gaze and my attention. It was on the "French side" of the paper.

"ANNONCEMENT.

"Vente importante des Nègres!"

Yes—it was they. The announcement was no surprise to me. I expected as much.

I turned to the translation on the reverse page, in order to comprehend it more clearly. There it was in all its broad black meaning:—

"Important Sale of Negroes!"

I read on:—

"Estate in Bankruptcy. Plantation Besançon!"

"Poor Eugénie!"

Farther:—

"Forty able-bodied field-hands, of different ages. Several first-rate domestic servants, coachman, cooks, chamber-maids, wagon-

drivers. A number of likely mulatto boys and girls, from ten to twenty," &c. &c.

The list followed *in extenso*. I read—

" Lot 1. *Scipio*, 48. *Able-bodied black, 5ft. 11in., understands house-work, and the management of horses. Sound and without blemish.*

" Lot 2. *Hannibal*, 40. *Dark mulatto, 5ft. 9in., good coachman, sound and steady.*

" Lot 3. *Cesar*, 43. *Black field-hand. Sound," &c. &c.*

My eyes could not wait for the disgusting details. They ran down the column in search of that name. They would have lit upon it sooner, but that my hands trembled, and the vibratory motion of the sheet almost prevented me from reading. It was there at length—*last upon the list!* "Why last?" No matter—her "description" was there.

Can I trust myself to read it? Down, burning heart, still your wild throbbings!

“ Lot 65. *Aurore.* 19. *Quadroon.*
Likely—good housekeeper, and sempstress.”

Portrait sketched by refined pen—brief and graphic.

“Likely,” ha! ha! ha! “Likely,” ha! ha! The brute who wrote that paragraph would have described Venus as a “likely gal.” ‘Sdeath! I cannot jest—this desecration of all that is lovely—all that is sacred—all that is dear to my heart, is torture itself. The blood is boiling in my veins—my bosom is wrung with dire emotions!

The journal fell from my hands, and I bent forward over the table, my fingers clutching each other. I could have groaned aloud had I been alone. But I was not. I sat in the great refectory of the hotel. Men were near who would have jeered at my agony had they but known its cause.

Some minutes elapsed before I could reflect on what I had read. I sat in a

kind of stupor, brought on by the violence of my emotions.

Reflection came at length, and my first thought was of action. More than ever did I now desire to become the purchaser of the beautiful slave—to redeem her from this hideous bondage. I should buy her. I should set her free. True or false to me, I should accomplish this all the same. I should make no claim for gratitude. She should choose for herself. She should be free, if not in the disposal of her gratitude, at least in that of her love. A love based only on gratitude would not content me. Such could not last. Her heart should freely bestow itself. If I had already won it, well. If not, and it had fixed its affection upon another—mine be the grief. Aurore, at all events, shall be happy.

My love had elevated my soul—had filled it with such noble resolves.

And now to set her free.

When was this hideous exhibition—this

“Important Sale,” to come off? When was my betrothed to be sold, and I to assist at the spectacle?

I took up the paper again to ascertain the time and place. The place I knew well — the Rotundo of the St. Louis exchange — adjoining the hotel, and within twenty yards of where I sat. That was the slave-market. But the time — *it* was of more importance — indeed of all importance. Strange I did not think of this before! Should it be at an early date, and my letter not have arrived! I dared not trust myself with such a supposition. Surely it would be a week — several days, at the least — before a sale of so much importance would take place. Ha! it may have been advertised for some days. The negroes may have been brought down only at the last moment!

My hands trembled, as my eyes sought the paragraph. At length they rested upon it. I read with painful surprise:—

“*To-morrow, at twelve!*”

I looked to the date of the journal. All correct. It was the issue of that morning. I looked to the dial on the wall. The clock was on the stroke of *twelve*! Just one day to elapse.

“O God! if my letter should not have arrived!”

I drew forth my purse, and mechanically told over its contents. I knew not why I did so. I knew it contained but a hundred dollars. The “sportsmen” had reduced it in bulk. When I had finished counting it, I could not help smiling at the absurdity of the thing. “A hundred dollars *for the quadroon!* *Likely—good housekeeper, &c.!* *a hundred dollars bid!*” The auctioneer would not be likely to repeat the bid.

All now depended on the English mail. If it had not arrived already, or did not before the morning, I would be helpless. Without the letter on my New Orleans

banker, I could not raise fifty pounds—watch, jewels, and all. As to borrowing, I did not think of such a thing. Who was to lend me money? Who to an almost perfect stranger would advance such a sum as I required? No one I felt certain. Reigart could not have helped me to so large an amount, even had there been time to communicate with him. No — there was no one who *would*, that *could* have favoured me. No one I could think of.

“Stop! — the banker himself! Happy thought, the banker Brown! Good generous Brown, of the English house, Brown and Co., who, with smiling face, has already cashed my drafts for me. He will do it! The very man! Why did I not think of him sooner? Yes; if the letter have not reached him I shall tell him that I expect it every day, and its amount. He will advance the money.

“Twelve o’clock gone. There is no time

to be lost. He's in his counting-house by this. I shall at once apply to him."

I seized my hat, and hastening out of the hotel, took my way through the streets towards the banking-house of Brown and Co.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BROWN AND CO.

THE banking-house of Brown and Co. was in Canal Street. From the St. Louis Exchange, Canal Street may be approached by the Rue Conti, or the parallel street of the Rue Royale. The latter is the favourite promenade of the gay Creole-French, as St. Charles Street is for the fashionable Americans.

You will wonder at this *mélange* of French and English in the nomenclature of streets. The truth is, that New Orleans has a peculiarity somewhat rare. It is composed of two distinct cities—a French and an American one. I might even say *three*, for there is a Spanish quarter with a charac-

ter distinct from either, and where you may see on the corner the Spanish designation "Calle," as the *Calle de Casacalvo*, *Calle del Obispo*, &c. This peculiarity is explained by referring to the history of Louisiana. It was colonised by the French in the early part of the eighteenth century, New Orleans being founded in 1717. The French held Louisiana till 1762, when it was ceded to Spain, and remained in her possession for a period of nearly fifty years—till 1798, when France once more became its master. Five years after, in 1803, Napoleon sold this valuable country to the American government for 15,000,000 of dollars—the best bargain which Brother Jonathan has ever made, and apparently a slack one on the part of Napoleon. After all, Napoleon was right. The sagacious Corsican, no doubt, foresaw that it could not have long remained the property of France. Sooner or later the American flag would wave over the Crescent City, and

Napoleon's easy bargain has no doubt saved America a war, and France a humiliation.

This change of masters will explain the peculiarity of the population of New Orleans. The characteristics of all three nations are visible in its streets, in its houses, in the features, habits, and dress of its citizens. In nothing are the national traces more distinctly marked than in the different styles of architecture. In the American quarter you have tall brick dwellings, several stories in height, their shining fronts half occupied with rows of windows, combining the light and ornamental with the substantial and useful. This is typical of the Anglo-American. Equally typical of the French character are the light wooden one-story houses, painted in gay colours, with green verandah palings; windows that open as doors, and a profusion of gauzy curtains hanging behind them.

Equally a type of the grand solemn character of the Spaniard, are the massive sombre structures of stone and lime, of the imposing Moorish style, that is still seen in many of the streets of New Orleans. Of these, the Great Cathedral is a fine specimen—that will stand as a monument of Spanish occupancy, long after both the Spanish and French population has been absorbed and melted down in the alembic of the Anglo-American propagandism. The American part of New Orleans is that which is highest on the river—known as the Faubourgs St. Mary and Annunciation. Canal Street separates it from the French quarter—which last is the old city, chiefly inhabited by Creole French and Spaniards.

A few years ago, the French and American populations were about equal. Now the Saxon element predominates, and rapidly absorbs all the others. In time the indolent Creole must yield to the more energetic American—in other words, New

Orleans will be Americanized. Progress and civilization will gain by this, at the expense—according to the sentimental school—of the poetic and picturesque.

Two distinct cities, then, are there in New Orleans. Each has its Exchange distinct from the other—a distinct municipal court and public offices—each has its centre of fashionable resort—its favourite promenade for the *flaneurs*, of which the South-western metropolis can boast a large crowd—its own theatres, ball-rooms, hotels, and cafés. In fact, a walk of a few paces transports one into quite a different world. The crossing of Canal Street is like being transferred from Broadway to the Boulevards.

In their occupations there is a wide difference between the inhabitants of the two quarters. The Americans deal in the strong staples of human life. The great dépôts of provisions, of cotton, of tobacco, of lumber, and the various sorts of raw produce, will be found among them. On

the other hand, the finer fabrics, the laces, the jewels, the modes and modistes, the silks and satins, and all articles of *bijouterie* and *vertù*, pass through the lighter fingers of the Creoles—for these inherit both the skill and taste of their Parisian progenitors. Fine old rich wine-merchants, too, will be found in the French part, who have made fortunes by importing the wines of Bordeaux and Champagne—for claret and champagne are the wines that flow most freely on the banks of the Mississippi.

A feeling of jealousy is not wanting between the two races. The strong energetic Kentuckian affects to despise the gay pleasure-loving Frenchman, while the latter—particularly the old Creole noblesse—regard with contempt the *bizarrerie* of the Northern, so that feuds and collisions between them are not unfrequent. New Orleans is, *par excellence*, the city of the duello. In all matters of this kind the Kentuckian finds the Creole quite his equal

—his full match in spirit, courage, and skill. I know many Creoles who are notorious for the number of their duels. An opera-singer or *danseuse* frequently causes half a score or more — according to her merits, or mayhap her demerits. The masqued and quadroon-balls are also frequent scenes of quarrel among the wine-heated bloods who frequent them. Let no one fancy that life in New Orleans is without incident or adventure. A less prosaic city it would be hard to find.

* * * * *

These subjects did *not* come before my mind as I walked towards the banking-house of Brown and Co. My thoughts were occupied with a far different theme—one that caused me to press on with an agitated heart and hurried steps.

The walk was long enough to give me time for many a hypothetic calculation. Should my letter and the bill of exchange have arrived, I should be put in possession of

funds at once,—enough, as I supposed, for my purpose—enough to buy my slave-bride! If not yet arrived, how then? Would Brown advance the money? My heart throbbed audibly as I asked myself this question. Its answer, affirmative or negative, would be to me like the pronouncement of a sentence of life or death.

And yet I felt more than half certain that Brown would do so. I could not fancy his smiling generous John-Bull face clouded with the seriousness of a refusal. Its great importance to me at that moment—the certainty of its being repaid, and in a few days, or hours at the farthest—surely he would not deny me! What to him, a man of millions, could be the inconvenience of advancing five hundred pounds? Oh! he would do it to a certainty. No fear but he would do it!

I crossed the threshold of the man of money, my spirits buoyant with sweet anticipation. When I re-crossed it my soul was

saddened with bitter disappointment. My letter had not yet arrived — Brown refused the advance !

I was too inexperienced in business to comprehend its sordid calculations—its cold courtesy. What cared the banker for my pressing wants ? What to him was my ardent appeal ? Even had I told him my motives, my object, it would have been all the same. That same cold denying smile would have been the reply—aye, even had my life depended upon it.

I need not detail the interview. It was brief enough. I was told, with a bland smile, that my letter had not yet come to hand. To my proposal for the advance the answer was blunt enough. The kind generous smile blanked off Brown's ruddy face. It was not business. It could not be done. There was no sign thrown out — no invitation to talk farther. I might have appealed in a more fervent strain. I might have confessed the purpose for which I wanted the

money, but Brown's face gave me no encouragement. Perhaps it was as well I did not. Brown would have chuckled over my delicate secret. The town, over its teatable, would have relished it as a rich joke.

Enough — my letter had not arrived — Brown refused the advance. With Hope behind me and Despair in front, I hurried back to the hotel.

CHAPTER XXIV.

EUGÈNE D'HAUTEVILLE.

THE remainder of the day I was occupied in searching for Aurore. I could learn nothing of her — not even whether she had yet reached the city!

In search of her I went to the quarters where the others had their temporary lodgment. She was not there. She had either not yet arrived, or was kept at some other place. They had not seen her! They knew nothing about her.

Disappointed and wearied with running through the hot and dusty streets, I returned to the hotel.

I waited for night. I waited for the

coming of Eugène d'Hauteville, for such was the name of my new acquaintance.

I was strangely interested in this young man. Our short interview had inspired me with a singular confidence in him. He had given proof of a friendly design towards me; and still more had impressed me with a high idea of his knowledge of the world. Young as he was, I could not help fancying him a being possessed of some mysterious power. I could not help thinking that in some way he might aid me. There was nothing remarkable in his being so young and still *au-fait* to all the mysteries of life. Precocity is the privilege of the American, especially the native of New Orleans. A Creole at fifteen is a man.

I felt satisfied that D'Hauteville—about my own age—knew far more of the world than I, who had been half my life cloistered within the walls of an antique university.

I had an instinct that he both *could* and *would* serve me.

How? you may ask. By lending me the money I required?

It could not be thus. I believed that he was himself without funds, or possessed of but little—far too little to be of use to me. My reason for thinking so was the reply he had made when I asked for his address. There was something in the tone of his answer that led me to the thought that he was without fortune—even without a home. Perhaps a clerk out of place, thought I; or a poor artist. His dress was rich enough—but dress is no criterion on a Mississippi steam-boat.

With these reflections it was strange I should have been impressed with the idea *he* could serve me! But I was so, and had therefore resolved to make him the confidant of my secret—the secret of my love—the secret of my misery.

Perhaps another impulse acted upon me, and aided in bringing me to this determination. He whose heart has been charged

with a deep grief must know the relief which sympathy can afford. The sympathy of friendship is sweet and soothing. There is balm in the counsel of a kind companion.

My sorrow had been long pent up within my own bosom, and yearned to find expression. Stranger among strangers, I had no one to share it with me. Even to the good Reigart I had not confessed myself. With the exception of Aurore herself, Eugénie—poor Eugénie—was alone mistress of my secret. Would that she of all had never known it!

Now to this youth Eugène—strange coincidence of name!—I was resolved to impart it—resolved to unburden my heart. Perhaps, in so doing I might find consolation or relief.

I waited for the night. It was at night he had promised to come. I waited with impatience—with my eyes bent almost continuously on the index finger of time, and chafing

at the slow measured strokes of the pendulum.

I was not disappointed. He came at length. His silvery voice rang in my ears, and he stood before me.

As he entered my room, I was once more struck with the melancholy expression of his countenance—the pale cheek—the resemblance to some face I had met before.

The room was close and hot. The summer had not yet quite departed. I proposed a walk. We could converse as freely in the open air, and there was a lovely moon to light us on our way.

As we sallied forth, I offered my visitor a cigar. This he declined, giving his reason. He did not smoke.

Strange, thought I, for one of a race, who almost universally indulge in the habit. Another peculiarity in the character of my new acquaintance!

We passed up the Rue Royale, and turned along Canal Street in the direction of the

“Swamp.” Presently we crossed the Rue des Rampartes, and soon found ourselves outside the limits of the city.

Some buildings appeared beyond, but they were not houses—at least not dwelling-places for the living. The numerous cupolas crowned with crosses—the broken columns—the monuments of white marble, gleaming under the moon, told us that we looked upon a city of the dead. It was the great cemetery of New Orleans—that cemetery where the poor after death are *drowned*, and the rich fare no better, for they are *baked*!

The gate stood open—the scene within invited me—its solemn character was in unison with my spirit. My companion made no objection, and we entered.

After wending our way among tombs, and statues, and monuments; miniature temples, columns, obelisks, sarcophagi carved in snow-white marble—passing graves that spoke of recent affliction—others of older date, but

garnished with fresh flowers—the symbols of love or affection that still lingered—we seated ourselves upon a moss-grown slab, with the fronds of the Babylonian willow waving above our heads, and drooping mournfully around us.

CHAPTER XXV.

PITY FOR LOVE.

ALONG the way we had conversed upon several topics indifferently—of my gambling adventure on the boat—of the “sportsmen” of New Orleans—of the fine moonlight.

Until after entering the cemetery, and taking our seats upon the tomb, I had disclosed nothing of that which altogether engrossed my thoughts. The time had now arrived for unbosoming myself, and half-an-hour after Eugène D’Hauteville knew the story of my love.

I confided to him all that had occurred from the time of my leaving New Orleans, up to the period of our meeting upon the Houma. My interview with the banker

Brown, and my fruitless search that day for Aurore, were also detailed.

From first to last he listened without interrupting me; only once, when I described the scene of my confession to Eugénie, and its painful ending. The details of this seemed to interest him exceedingly,—in fact, to give him pain. More than once I was interrupted by his sobs, and by the light of the moon I could see that he was in tears!

“Noble youth!” thought I, “thus to be affected by the sufferings of a stranger!”

“Poor Eugénie!” murmured he, “is *she* not to be pitied?”

“Pitied! ah! Monsieur; you know not how much I pity her! That scene will never be effaced from my memory. If pity—friendship—any sacrifice could make amends, how willingly would I bestow it upon her,—all but that which is not in my power to give,—my love. Deeply, Monseieur D’Hauteville,—deeply do I grieve for that noble lady. Oh! that I could pluck the

sting from her heart which I have been the innocent cause of placing there. But surely she will recover from this unfortunate passion? Surely in time——”

“Ah! never! never!” interrupted D’Hauteville, with an earnestness of manner that surprised me.

“Why say you so, Monsieur?”

“Why?—because, I have some skill in such affairs; young as you think me, I have experienced a similar misfortune. Poor Eugénie! *Such a wound is hard to heal*; she will not recover from it. Ah—never!”

“Indeed, I pity her—with my whole soul, I pity her.”

“You should seek her, and say so.”

“Why?” I asked somewhat astonished at the suggestion.

“Perhaps your pity expressed to her might give consolation.”

“Impossible. It would have the contrary effect.”

“ You misjudge, Monsieur. Unrequited love is far less hard to bear when it meets with sympathy. It is only haughty contempt and heartless triumph that wring blood-drops from the heart. Sympathy is balm to the wounds of love. Believe me, it is so. *I feel it to be so. Oh! I feel it to be so!*”

The last two phrases he spoke with an earnestness that sounded strangely in my ears.

“ Mysterious youth!” thought I. “ So gentle, so compassionate, and yet so worldly-wise!”

I felt as though I conversed with some spiritual being,—some superior mind who comprehended all.

His doctrine was new to me, and quite contrary to the general belief. At a later period of my life I became convinced of its truth.

“ If I thought my sympathy would have such an effect,” replied I, “ I should seek Eugénie,—I should offer her——”

"There will be a time for that afterward," said D'Hauteville, interrupting me; "your present business is more pressing. You purpose to *buy this quadroon?*"

"I did so this morning. Alas! I have no longer a hope. It will not be in my power."

"How much money have these sharpers left you?"

"Not much over one hundred dollars."

"Ha! that will not do. From your description of her she will bring ten times the amount. A misfortune, indeed! My own purse is still lighter than yours. I have not a hundred dollars. *Pardieu!* it is a sad affair."

D'Hauteville pressed his head between his hands, and remained for some moments silent, apparently in deep meditation. From his manner I could not help believing that he really sympathised with me, and that he was thinking of some plan to assist me.

"After all," he muttered to himself, just

loud enough for me to hear what was said, "if she should not succeed—if she should not find the papers—then she, too, must be a sacrifice. Oh! it is a terrible risk. It might be better not—it might be——"

"Monsieur!" I said, interrupting him, "of what are you speaking?"

"Oh!—ah! pardon me: it is an affair I was thinking of—*n'importe*. We had better return, Monsieur. It is cold. The atmosphere of this solemn place chills me."

He said all this with an air of embarrassment, as though he had been speaking his thoughts unintentionally.

Though astonished at what he had uttered, I could not press him for an explanation; but, yielding to his wish, I rose up to depart. I had lost hope. Plainly he had it not in his power to serve me.

At this moment a resource suggested itself to my mind, or rather the forlorn hope of a resource.

I communicated it to my companion.

"I have still these two hundred dollars," said I. "They are of no more service to me for the purchase of *Aurore* than if they were so many pebbles. Suppose I try to increase the amount at the gaming-table?"

"Oh, I fear it would be an idle attempt. You would lose as before."

"That is not so certain, Monsieur. The chances at least are equal. I need not play with men of skill, like those upon the boat. Here in New Orleans there are gaming-houses—plenty of them—where *games of chance* are carried on. These are of various kinds—as *faro*, *craps*, *loto*, and *roulette*. I can choose some one of these, where bets are made on the tossing of a die or the turning of a card. It is just as likely I may win as lose. What say you, Monsieur? Give me your counsel!"

"You speak truly," replied he. "There is a chance in the game. It offers a hope of your winning. If you lose, you will be

no worse off as regards your intentions for to-morrow. If you win——”

“True, true—if I win——”

“You must not lose time then. It is growing late. These gaming-houses should be open at this hour: no doubt they are now in the very tide of their business. Let us find one!”

“You will go with me? Thanks, M. D’Hauteville! Thanks—*allons!*”

We hastily traversed the walk that led to the entrance of the cemetery; and, issuing from the gate, took our way back into the town.

We headed for our point of departure—the Rue St. Louis; for I knew that in that neighbourhood lay the principal gambling hells.

It was not difficult to find them. At that period there was no concealment required in such matters. The gambling passion among the Creoles, inherited from

the original possessors of the city, was too rife among all classes to be put down by a police. The municipal authorities in the American quarter had taken some steps toward the suppression of this vice; but their laws had no force on the French side of Canal Street; and Creole police had far different ideas, as well as different instructions. In the French faubourgs, gaming was not considered so hideous a crime, and the houses appropriated to it were open and avowed.

As you passed along Rue Conti, or St. Louis, or the Rue Bourbon, you could not fail to notice several large gilded lamps, upon which you might read "faro" and "craps," "loto" or "roulette,"—odd words to the eyes of the uninitiated, but well enough understood by those whose business it was to traverse the streets of the "First Municipality."

Our hurrying steps soon brought us in front of one of these establishments, whose

lamp told us in plain letters that "faro" was played inside.

It was the first that offered ; and, without hesitating a moment, I entered, followed by D'Hauteville.

We had to climb a wide stairway, at the top of which we were received by a whiskered and moustached fellow in waiting. I supposed that he was about to demand some fee for admission. I was mistaken in my conjecture. Admission was perfectly free. The purpose of this individual in staying us was to divest us of arms, for which he handed us a ticket, that we might reclaim them in going out. That he had disarmed a goodly number before our turn came, was evident from the numerous butts of pistols, hafts of bowie-knives, and handles of daggers, that protruded from the pigeon-holes of a shelf-like structure standing in one corner of the passage.

The whole proceeding reminded me of the scenes I had often witnessed—the

surrender of canes, umbrellas, and parasols, on entering a picture-gallery or a museum. No doubt it was a necessary precaution—the non-observance of which would have led to many a scene of blood over the gaming-table.

We yielded up our weapons—I a pair of pistols, and my companion a small silver dagger. These were ticketed, duplicates delivered to us, and we were allowed to pass on into the “saloon.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

ON GAMES AND GAMBLING.

THE passion of gaming is universal amongst men. Every nation indulges in it to a greater or less extent. Every nation, civilised or savage, has its game, from whist and cribbage at Almacks to "chuck-a-luck" and "poke-stick" upon the prairies.

Moral England fancies herself clear of the stain. Her gossiping traveller rarely fails to fling a stone at the foreigner on this head. French, German, Spaniard, and Mexican, are in turn accused of an undue propensity for this vice. Cant—all cant! There is more gambling in moral England than in any country of my knowing. I do not speak of card-playing about the purlieus of

Piccadilly. Go to Epsom races on a "Derby day," and there you may form an idea of the scale upon which English gaming is carried on—for gaming it is in the very lowest sense of the word. Talk of "noble sport,"—of an admiration for that fine animal—the horse. Bah! Noble, indeed! Fancy those seedy scamps, who in thousands and tens of thousands flock upon every race-course,—fancy them and their harlotic companions possessed with the idea of anything fine or noble! Of all who crowd there the horse alone is noble—naught could be more ignoble than his *entourage*.

No, moral England! You are no pattern for the nations in this respect. You are not free from the stain, as you imagine yourself. You have a larger population of gamblers, —*horse-gamblers* if you will, than any other people; and, however noble be your game, I make bold to affirm that your gamesters are the seediest, snobbiest, and most revolting of the tribe. There is something inde-

scribably mean in the life and habits of those hungry-looking vultures who hang about the corners of Coventry Street and the Haymarket, out at elbows, out at heels, sneaking from tavern to betting-house, and from betting-house to tavern. There is a meanness, a positive cowardice in the very nature of their game,—their small ventures and timid “hedging” of bets. In comparison, the bold ringer of dice has something *almost* noble in him. Your apathetic Don, who stakes his gold onzas on a single throw of the ivory—your Mexican monté-player, who risks his doubloons on each turn of the cards,—are, to some extent, dignified by the very boldness of their venture. With them gambling is a passion—its excitement their lure; but Brown, and Smith, and Jones, cannot even plead *the passion*. Even *that* would exalt them.

Of all gamblers by profession the “sportsman” of the Mississippi Valley is perhaps the most picturesque. I have already al-

luded to their elegant style of attire, but, independent of that, there is a dash of the gentleman—a certain *chivalresqueness* of character which distinguishes them from all others of their calling. During the wilder episodes of my life I have been *honoured* with the acquaintance of more than one of these *gentlemen*, and I cannot help bearing a somewhat high testimony in their favour. Several have I met of excellent moral character,—though, perhaps, not quite up to the standard of Exeter Hall. Some I have known of noble and generous hearts—doers of noble actions—who, though outcasts in society, were not outcasts to their own natures; men who would bravely resent the slightest insult that might be put upon them. Of course there were others, as the Chorleys and Hatchers, who would scarce answer to this description of Western “sportsmen”—but I really believe that such are rather the exception than the rule.

A word about the “games of America.”

The true national game of the United States is the "election." The local or state elections afford so many opportunities of betting, just as the minor horse-races do in England; while the great quadrennial, the Presidential election, is the "Derby day" of America. The enormous sums that change hands upon such occasions, and the enormous number of them, would be incredible. A statistic of these bets, could such be given, and their amount, would surprise even the most "enlightened citizen" of the States themselves. Foreigners cannot understand the intense excitement which is felt during an election time throughout the United States. It would be difficult to explain it, in a country where men generally know that the fate of the particular candidate has, after all, but a slight influence on their material interests. True, party spirit and the great stake of all—the "spoils" of office—will account for some of the interest taken in the result, but not for all. I am of opinion that the "balance"

of the excitement may be set down to the credit of the gaming passion. Nearly every second man you meet has a bet, or rather a "book," upon the Presidential election!

Election, therefore, is the true national game, indulged in by high, low, rich, and poor.

To bet upon an election, however, is not considered *infra dig.* It is not *professional* gambling.

The games for that purpose are of various kinds—in most of which cards are relied upon to furnish the chances. Dice and billiards are also in vogue—billiards to a considerable extent. It is a very mean village in the United States—particularly in the South and West—that does not furnish one or more public billiard-tables; and among Americans may be found some of the most expert (crack) players in the world. The "Creoles" of Louisiana are distinguished at this game.

"Ten pins" is also a very general game,

and every town has its "ten-pin alley." But "billiards" and "ten-pins" are not true "gambling games." The first is patronised rather as an elegant amusement, and the latter as an excellent exercise. Cards and dice are the real weapons of the "sportsman," but particularly the former. Besides the English games of whist and cribbage, and the French games of "vingt-un," "rouge-et-noir," &c., the American gambler plays "poker," "euchre," "seven-up," and a variety of others. In New Orleans there is a favourite of the Creoles called "craps," a dice game, and "keno," and "loto," and "roulette," played with balls and a revolving wheel. Farther to the South, among the Spano-Mexicans, you meet the game of "monté,"—a card game, distinct from all the others. Monté is the national game of Mexico.

To all other modes of getting at your money, the South-Western sportsman prefers "faro." It is a game of Spanish origin, as

its name imports ; indeed, it differs but little from *monté*, and was no doubt obtained from the Spaniards of New Orleans. Whether native or exotic to the towns of the Mississippi Valley, in all of them it has become perfectly naturalised ; and there is no sportsman of the West who does not understand and practise it.

The game of *faro* is simple enough. The following are its leading features :—

A green cloth or baize covers the table. Upon this the thirteen cards of a suite are laid out in two rows, with their faces turned up. They are usually attached to the cloth by gum, to prevent them from getting out of place.

A square box, like an overgrown snuff-box, is next produced. It is of the exact size and shape to hold two packs of cards. It is of solid silver. Any other metal would serve as well ; but a professed “ *faro dealer* ” would scorn to carry a mean implement of his calling. The object of this box is to

hold the cards to be dealt, and to assist in dealing them. I cannot explain the internal mechanism of this mysterious box ; but I can say that it is without a lid, open at one edge—where the cards are pressed in—and contains an interior spring, which, touched by the finger of the dealer, pushes out the cards one by one as they lie in the pack. This contrivance is not at all essential to the game, which may be played without the box. Its object is to ensure a fair deal, as no card can be recognised by any mark on its back, since up to the moment of drawing they are all invisible within the box. A stylish “faro box” is the ambition of every “faro dealer”—the specific title of all “sportsmen” whose game is faro.

Two packs of cards, well shuffled, are first put into the box ; and the dealer, resting the left hand upon it, and holding the right in readiness, with the thumb extended, pauses a moment until some bets are made. The “dealer” is in reality your antagonist

in the game; he is the "banker" who pays all your gains, and pockets all your losses. As many may bet as can sit or stand around the table; but all are betting against the dealer himself. Of course, in this case, the faro dealer must be something of a proprietor to play the game at all; and the "faro bank" has usually a capital of several thousands of dollars — often hundreds of thousands to back it! Not unfrequently, after an unlucky run, the bank gets "broke;" and the proprietor of it may be years before he can establish another. An assistant or "croupier" usually sits beside the dealer. His business is to exchange the "cheques" for money, to pay the bets lost, and gather in those which the bank has won.

The cheques used in the game are pieces of ivory of circular form, of the diameter of dollars: they are white, red, or blue, with the value engraved upon them, and they are used as being more convenient than the money itself. When any one wishes

to leave off playing, he can demand from the bank to the amount specified on the cheques he may then hold.

The simplest method of betting "against faro" is, by placing the money on the face of any particular one of the cards that lie on the table. You may choose which you will of the thirteen. Say you have selected the ace, and placed your money upon the face of that card. The dealer then commences, and "draws" the cards out of the box one by one. After drawing each two he makes a pause. Until two aces follow each other, with no other card between, there is no decision. When two aces come together the bet is declared. If both appear in the drawing of the two cards, then the dealer takes your money; if only one is pulled out, and the other follows in the next drawing, you have won. You may then renew your bet upon the ace—double it if you will, or remove it to any other card—and these changes

you may make at any period of the deal—provided it is not done after the first of the two cards has been drawn.

Of course the game goes on, whether you play or not. The table is surrounded by bettors; some on one card, some on another; some by “paralee,” on two or more cards at a time; so that there is a constant “falling due” of bets, a constant rattling of cheques and chinking of dollars.

It is all a game of chance. “Skill” has naught to do with the game of faro; and you might suppose, as many do, that the chances are exactly equal for the dealer and his opponents. Such, however, is not the case; a peculiar arrangement of the cards produces a percentage in favour of the former, else there would be no faro bank; and although a rare run of ill fortune may go against the dealer for a time, if he can only hold out long enough, he is “bound to beat you” in the end.

A similar percentage will be against you

in all games of chance—"faro," "monté," or "craps"—wherever you bet against a "banker." Of course the banker will not deny this, but answers you, that that *small* percentage is to "pay for the game." It usually does, and well.

Such is faro—the game at which I had resolved to empty my purse, or win the price of my betrothed.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE FARO BANK.

WE entered the saloon. The game *voilà!*

At one end was the table—the bank. We could see neither bank nor dealer; both were hidden by the double ring of betters, who encircled the table—one line seated, the other standing behind. There were women, too, mingled in the crowd—seated and standing in every attitude—gay and beautiful women, decked out in the finery of fashion, but with a certain *braverie* of manner that betokened their unfortunate character.

D'Hauteville had guessed aright—the game was at its height. The look and attitudes of the bettors—their arms con-

stantly in motion, placing their stakes—the incessant rattling of the ivory cheques, and the clinking together of dollars,—all told that the game was progressing briskly.

A grand chandelier, suspended above the table, cast its brilliant light over the play and the players.

Near the middle of the saloon stood a large table, amply furnished with “refreshments.” Cold fowls, ham and tongue, chicken salad, and lobsters, cut-glass decanters filled with wine brandy and other liquors, garnished this table. Some of the plates and glasses bore the traces of having been already used, while others were clean and ready for any one who chose to play knife and fork a while. It was, in fact, a “free lunch,” or rather supper—free to any guest who chose to partake of it. Such is the custom of an American gambling-house.

The rich viands did not tempt either my companion or myself. We passed the table

without halting, and walked directly up to the "bank."

We reached the outer circle, and looked over the shoulders of the players, "*Shade of Fortuna! Chorley and Hatcher!*"

Yes—there sat the two sharpers, side by side, behind the faro table—not as mere betters, but acting respectively as banker and croupier of the game! Chorley held the dealing-box in his fingers, while Hatcher sat upon his right, with cheques dollars and bank-notes piled upon the table in front of him! A glance around the ring of faces showed us the pork-merchant as well. There sat he in his loose jeans coat and broad white hat, talking farmer-like, betting bravely, and altogether a stranger to both banker and croupier!

My companion and I regarded each other with a look of surprise.

After all, there was nothing to surprise us. A faro bank needs no charter, no

further preliminaries to its establishment than to light up a table, spread a green baize over it, and commence operations. The sportsmen were no doubt quite at home here. Their up-river excursion was only by way of a little variety—an interlude incidental to the summer. The “season” of New Orleans was now commencing, and they had just returned in time for it. Therefore there was nothing to be surprised at, in our finding them where we did.

At first seeing them, however, I felt astonishment, and my companion seemed to share it. I turned towards him, and was about proposing that we should leave the room again, when the wandering eye of the pseudo pork-merchant fell upon me.

“Hilloa! stranger,” he cried out, with an air of astonishment, “you hyar?”

“I believe so,” I replied unconcernedly.

“Wal! wal! I tho’t you war lost. Whar did you go, anyhow?” he inquired in a

tone of vulgar familiarity, and loud enough to turn the attention of all present upon myself and my companion.

"Aye—*whar* did I go?" I responded, keeping my temper, and concealing the annoyance I really felt at the fellow's impudence.

"Yes—that's jest what I wanted to know."

"Are you very anxious?" I asked.

"Oh, no—not particklerly so."

"I am glad of that," I responded, "as I don't intend telling you."

With all his swagger I could see that his crest fell a little at the general burst of laughter, that my somewhat *bizarre* remark had called forth.

"Come, stranger," he said, in a half-deprecatory, half-spiteful tone,—“you needn't a be so short-horned about it, I guess; I didn't mean no offence—but you know you left us so suddintly—never mind—'taint

no business o' mine. You're going to take a hand at faro, ain't you?

"Perhaps."

"Wal, then, it appears a nice game. I'm jest trying it for the first time myself. It's all chance, I believe,—jest like odds and evens. I'm a winnin' anyhow."

He turned his face to the bank, and appeared to busy himself in arranging his bets.

A fresh deal had commenced, and the players, drawn off for a moment by our conversation, became once more engaged in what was of greater interest to them—the little money-heaps upon the cards.

Of course, both Chorley and Hatcher recognised me; but they had restricted their recognitions to a friendly nod, and a glance that plainly said,—

"He's here! all right! he'll not go till he has tried to get back his hundred dollars—he'll have a shy at the bank—no fear but he will."

If such were their thoughts they were not far astray. My own reflections were as follows :—

“I may as well risk my money here as elsewhere. A faro bank is a faro bank all the same. There is no opportunity for cheating, where cards are thus dealt. The arrangement of the bets precludes every possibility of such a thing. Where one player loses to the bank, another may win from it by the very same turn ; and this of course checks the dealer from drawing the cards falsely—even if it were possible for him to do so. So I may as well play against Messrs. Chorley and Hatcher’s bank as any other—better, indeed, for if I am to win I shall have the satisfaction of the *revanche*, which these gentlemen owe me. I shall play here then. Do you advise me, Monsieur ?”

Part of the above reflections, and the interrogatory that wound them up, were addressed in a whisper to the young Creole.

He acknowledged their justice. He ad-

vised me to remain. He was of the opinion I might as well tempt fortune there as go farther.

Enough—I took out a five-dollar gold-piece, and placed it upon the ace.

No notice was taken of this—neither banker nor croupier, even turning their eyes in the direction of the bet. Such a sum as five dollars would not decompose the well-practised nerves of these gentlemen—where sums of ten, twenty, or even fifty times the amount, were constantly passing to and from their cash-box.

The deal proceeded, Chorley drawing the cards with that air of imperturbable *sang-froid* so characteristic of his class.

“Ace wins,” cried a voice, as two aces came forth together.

“Pay you in cheques, sir?” asked the croupier.

I assented, and a flat round piece of ivory, of a red colour, with the figure 5 in its centre, was placed upon my half-eagle. I

permitted both to remain upon the ace. The deal went on, and after a while two aces came out together, and two more of the red cheques were mine.

I suffered all four pieces, now worth twenty dollars, to lie. I had not come there to amuse myself. My purpose was very different ; and, impelled by that purpose, I was resolved not to waste time. If fortune was to prove favourable to me, her favours were as likely to be mine soon as late ; and when I thought of the real stake for which I was playing, I could not endure the suspense. No more was I satisfied at contact with the coarse and bawd company that surrounded the table.

The deal went on—and after some time aces again came out. This time I lost.

Without a word passing from his lips, the croupier drew in the cheques and gold-piece, depositing them in his japanned cash-box.

I took out my purse, and tried ten dollars upon the queen. I won. I doubled

the bet, and lost again. Another ten dollars won—another lost—another and another, and so on, now winning, now losing, now betting with cheques, now with gold-pieces—until at length I felt to the bottom of my purse without encountering a coin !

END OF VOL. II.







